

Polit. Pamphlet 148.

THREE LETTERS

TO THE

PEOPLE OF GREAT-BRITAIN,

AND PARTICULARLY TO THOSE

WHO SIGNED THE ADDRESSES

ON THE

LATE CHANGES OF ADMINISTRATION,

AND THE

DISSOLUTION OF THE PARLIAMENT.

L O N D O N:

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L E T T E R I.

Interdum Populus recte vidit, est ubi peccat.

J. E. T. R. K. J.

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As it was thought proper that these Letters should be published at a particular time, they were printed in haste, and have the following

E R R A T A.

Page 1st, line 13th, the sentence should be "That by your
" mistaking its disorders, and applying wrong remedies,
" you have yourselves brought on an accelerated and
" premature decrepit age, we have much to lament."

Page 11, line 22, these words are omitted between "current and point," "before it arrives at the"

Page 14, line 18, instead of "these" read "there."

— 28, line 4, for "or" read "and."

— 40, for "ability" read "inability."

— 48, line 24, for "equitability" read "equality."

— 52, line 13, dele "wide."

— 54, line 23, dele "any of."

— 70, line 10, for "a" read "and."

— 72, line 15, after the word "which," the sentence should be, "in former times you had always so eagerly flocked, was erected and displayed, you should have deserted it, led by a Peer."

Page 98, line 7, for "lovers" read "losers."



LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

THE very distinguished and unusual, at least, if not unprecedented part, you took on the removal of the late Administration, the coming in of the present, and the dissolution of Parliament, have engaged my thoughts to endeavour to discover, if possible, the principles on which you have founded your conduct, and the motives which have induced you to act in a manner apparently repugnant to your real interest, or to what has been always considered as your real interest by your ancestors, and as such contended for by them with rivers of their blood, from the first embryo of the Constitution to the present æra. By your mistaking its disorders, and applying wrong remedies, owing perhaps to an accelerated and premature

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decrepid age, we have much to lament. I wish first to direct your attention to the principles which have moved and guided the great political machine for so many ages past, and to the events which those principles and those motions have produced; because, by reasoning from past to future, which is the best, if not the only mode of reasoning, I know you will be able to judge, whether similar principles, and similar movements, will not again produce similar effects; and that, as the same seasons, in the great order of Nature, with little variation, produce the same weather and the same fruits, so the same operations of the human mind, and the actions produced by them, with very little variation, have produced, and will produce the same events; by which you will see, whether the events produced by the principles, on which you appear to have acted on this occasion, are such as you think right, and wish to produce again.

Though the names of Whig and Tory were not known long before the present century, the principles themselves are coeval with the Constitution; with it they had their existence, and when it dies they will die. Where the two great component parts of the Constitution are prerogative on one side, and the liberty of the people on the other, Toryism and Whiggism must be there also; and
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in the faint struggles between the Crown and the Parliament of France, Toryism and Whiggism, in substance, though not in name, were in France as much as in England. In England, their first appearance, in any degree of strength, was in that contest between Prerogative and Liberty, when the foundation of the Constitution was laid on Magna Charta; and by the due balance of Prerogative and Liberty, that is, by the due balance of Toryism and Whiggism, has that Constitution been supported, and when either of them have preponderated, the Constitution has been shaken, and even overturned, *pro tempore*, till by the restoration of the balance it has recovered and been restored. Instances of this are to be found in every reign, from the period I have mentioned to the present hour: to every man who has read even an abridgment of the History of this Country, they must be familiar, and I will not trespass on your patience by a strict enumeration of them; I will only recall to your memory a few, as the ground of this maxim, that the purity of this Constitution has ever depended, and must for ever depend, on the critically exact balance of these principles; that the prosperity of the State has ever been the consequence of this strict poize, and that whoever has thrown, or shall throw too great a weight into either scale, has been, and will be the greatest enemy to his country.

Before I proceed, I beg to observe, that by the word Prosperity of the State, I do not mean the glory acquired by extensive conquests and brilliant victories. A despotic monarch, and the slaves of his despotism, may call these Prosperity, but to the Constitution of Great-Britain they often have been, and may again be, the bitterest adversity. A monarch of France, with a great fleet and a numerous army, may call his state in prosperity, because he knows no want; but a poor and starving people, who have not salt to their potage, will give it another name. A monarch of Prussia, with two hundred thousand soldiers, and his coffers filled with treasure, may say he is on the heights of prosperity; but the subjects, or the slaves, for they are here synonymous, who have no security, that the few crowns they have this day secreted for the necessities of their families may not to-morrow be found, and taken to increase the prosperity of their master, and who dare not move a mile from their habitations without a royal licence, cannot, I believe, in your opinion, be called in a prosperous state. By Prosperity of a State, I understand, as great a portion of happiness to each individual, low as well as high, as the circumstances of human nature will admit; and I hold, that this must be acquired by far other means than conquests, victory's glory, which in many, and in some very recent cases, have been most destructive of it. I hope

hope you will forgive this digression, because, as the word may often occur, it is right to define the idea it is intended to convey.

The plastic hand of Magna Charta having drawn the Constitution from the chaos in which, till then, it had lain, and given it something like a form, the acts to confirm it under some princes, and the punishments of others who attempted to violate it, each (though by different modes, and sometimes contrary operations) contributed for some time to improve it, and something like civilization, the first step to the happiness of the people, began to appear; but this dawn of prosperity was lost in the dark clouds of the wars between the houses of York and Lancaster; and sometimes the despotism of the prince, and sometimes the despotism of the nobility, neither of which powers in those days considered the people, appeared for a long period to have shaken the Constitution asunder, and tyranny, from the one hand or the other, seemed to have established its seat for ever. The few rays of civilization which had illuminated the hemisphere disappeared, and commerce, with all its attendant blessings, was heard of no more. Prerogative had laid its iron hand upon them, and crushed them into annihilation; and during this period, England (which under princes who never pushed prerogative far, had

had, at one time, seen a fleet of near five thousand ships) had scarce a ship of trade. Commerce, such as it was, was carried on only by Jews and Lombards, and the name of an English fleet, so formidable under Edgar, unknown in Europe; a few barks for fishing, or to transport soldiers, composed her whole marine; manufactures were scarce known; a coarse woollen suit, or a leather jerkin, were the most magnificent apparel; the luxuries, nay the conveniencies of life, those conveniencies without which life now would be thought insupportable, the * vegetables and fruits, which at this day compose a principal part of the food of the lowest orders of the people, were not heard of; the nobles, immured in their castles, lived three parts of the year on salted flesh or dried fish, like the wretched savages of Greenland or Nova Zembla, and tyrannized over their miserable tenants, to make them furnish, generally in kind, these articles, or some means of providing them. The privileges of the people were not regarded, their representatives formed an insignificant assembly; the Members of the House of Commons were attended with no marks of dignity or respect; and when this is so, when the House of Commons sinks, and

* In the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, most of the commonest species of vegetables, cabbages, carrots, hops, and the lowest kinds of fruits, were first imported from Flanders.

is trampled upon by haughty prerogative, commerce ever has sunk, and must ever sink, for commerce and despotism never inhabit the same region. True it is, that during this period, there was little commerce in any other part of Europe; but it is as true, that there was no freedom in any other part of Europe; and when the shackles of slavery were first compleatly broken, which was in the Netherlands, commerce at once started up, and grew on a sudden to an amazing height and strength. Small causes often produce great effects, and such as at the time seem to bear no analogy to them. The first emancipation of Parliament, and the first dawn of its necessary concomitants, literature, manufacture, commerce, and conveniences, came in the reign of a prince, of principles as tyrannical as any which had ever been seen on the throne of England; but a chain of fortuitous unforeseen circumstances made these very principles produce effects the reverse of their usual ones. For the ungovernable passions of Henry VIII. meeting opposition from the ill-judging policy of the Court of Rome, infligated him to throw off the yoke of Popery; and the blow which overturned the gloomy cells of Monks and narrow-minded priests, dispelled, at the same instant, the hitherto impenetrable darkness, under which they had so long and so carefully concealed every species of information, knowledge and literature,

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and kept the minds of men of all ranks in the bonds of superstition and ignorance. High and haughty as the spirit of Henry was, yet the separation from the See of Rome was a work of such magnitude, that he found it necessary to call in every possible aid to support him, and forced him to give a consequence and importance to Parliaments, in order that their acts of rejection of the authority of the Pope, and the declaration of his own supremacy, might have the greater weight and strength: from that moment, England within itself, and without to all the world, put on a new aspect, and Parliament itself emancipated, emancipated as by miracle every part of the State; property particularly had been in bondage, but by many excellent laws relative to civil policy, property was set free for general benefit, and more especially for the benefit of trade; for transfers of property were made easy, expeditious and secure, and a new mode of increasing the capitals, and protecting the capitals necessary for carrying trade successfully on, made its progress rapid; manufactures grew, encreased population at home, and finding their way into other countries, brought back wealth, arts and sciences; ships multiplied, and commerce, like a noble British oak, extended its fertile and beneficent branches over the universe; books were read, books were written, and the freedom of the press became necessary, to publish,

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in the most favourable light, his motives for that conduct which had amazed the world. Small even as that freedom then was, it gave a wonderful expansion to the minds of men, shewing, in the first moment of its existence, presages of how vast its importance must be in a more mature age, and how strictly and cautiously every avenue to encroachment upon it should be watched and defended *. Elegance and refinement of manners grew fast under its friendly protection, and as sciences advanced, barbarism retired, and the conveniencies of the body (little as morose affected cynicks may account them, yet, while men are men, of great moment in the scale of terrestrial happiness) accompanied the improvements of the mind; men ceased to be savage, their habitations, from hovels fit only for swine, grew neat and comfortable; the fruits and vegetables unknown before, found their way into this island, and made

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* See the Post Office Bill of this last sessions, and reflect a moment on the contempt shewn to the late House of Commons, and say, have we not cause to fear, that we may again fall into this unhappy state? for if the representatives of the people are ever depreciated, and Prerogative and Toryism raised above Liberty and Whiggism, and the freedom of the press, though not all at once openly taken away, yet preliminarily by dark and secret means limited and restrained, ignorance, superstition and barbarism, with all their horrid train of mental and corporeal fetters, must rush in again, overpower, and enslave us.

it not only what it still is, the garden unrivalled in the universe for beauty and pleasure, but productive also of articles, not only of luxury, to gratify the appetite, but to improve the health, encrease the strength, and prolong the life of the inhabitants, by substituting a wholesome diet to the swinish food they had before subsisted upon.

What chance and vice, under Henry, undesignedly sowed the seeds of, the virtues of his immediate successor, and some virtues (for some she had) in Elizabeth, raised to a plant of great size and strength, and what is not usual, opposite and jarring qualities; virtues and vices concurred in giving it cultivation and nourishment: for what the violence of Henry's passions, not the love of his people had induced him, in despite of his prerogative and despotic principles, to begin, Elizabeth (though by nature of principles nearly as tyrannical as those of her father, yet possessing virtues to which he was a stranger, which counterbalanced those principles, wisdom in herself, great abilities and wisdom in her Ministers, the natural consequences of that wisdom in her, and, above all, a real love for her people, of whom, in her less violent and passionate moments, she always considered herself the Guardian and Trustee) supported and continued, for prerogative gained nothing, nor did Parliament lose. The consequential benefits of prerogative

prerogative not extending, and the Commons keeping their ground, which had already so materially affected the State, continued still to pour in, and England became not only a great maritime nation for commerce and wealth, but a great maritime power for the protection of that commerce; and the victories obtained by her fleets not being of the nature which bring evil, but on the contrary the greatest good, England, at the close of her reign, was in a state of both true prosperity and glory, improving and thriving at home, and respected abroad. To nothing but the depressing prerogative, which at that time stood too high, and raising the liberties and importance of Parliament (that is, of the people, for they cannot be separate! though sometimes for a moment the people themselves have been led to think and act otherwise, of which they have soon and seriously repented) can be attributed both the mental and corporeal advantages the inhabitants of England then enjoyed. But as it is often seen, that the current point to which it tends is slackened by an opposite current meeting and forcing it back, till raised and swelled, it again rushes forward with redoubled strength and vigour. So under the unfortunate (unfortunate because weak and ill-judging) House of Stuart, the Princes of that race, not content with what would have made the happiest Monarchs in the universe the Kings of

their people, chose to be their tyrants. The tide of prerogative slackened and backed that of Liberty for a short time, when it returned with an impetuosity which overpassed and broke down all bounds. It must strike every man, how long suffering the people of this country have always been; and from the first contests between the Barons and their Sovereigns to the present moment, how much and how long they have endured before they have come to resistance and force; but once driven to them, how impetuous and violent, particularly under these ill fated Princes, who, by various acts of encroachment on their Liberties, and above all, contempt of Parliaments, at last provoked them to violence and fury, and drove them in madness and rage to acts on their side as unjustifiable as subversive of public prosperity and private happiness, as any of which they complained: and Liberty, carried beyond its due bounds and prerogative, here depressed too low, the Constitution was overturned for a time; and when it appeared to be restored under Charles II. and James II. that appearance was but of short duration, and the balance only inclined the other way; for these Princes, as despotic in principles, and as insincere as their father, but possessing more of that unroyal quality, low cunning, and, as it was called then, King-craft, thought, by private and secret means, to obtain that underhand by art, which their grandfather

grandfather and father had failed in attempting openly and by force, to subdue to their arbitrary wills the lives and fortunes of their subjects, while they secured their conquest by binding their minds in their former chains of ignorance, superstition, and Popery ; but the Constitution had acquired too great a strength, and these attempts had produced such defences and outworks by the many salutary laws, that it was become too strong to be easily again taken, and the balance of the component parts, prerogative and liberty, so established, even by these Princes who employed all their arts to destroy it, that tho' it may be shaken, and during the convulsion much evil may ensue, it will be a work of great difficulty, unless you, its natural defenders, betray your trust, by joining in the attack again to overturn it ; and from attention to the events of this period, may be learned how little the appearance of popular favor and support, when obtained by delusion and deceit, is to be depended upon. For the sulsome and numerous addresses which had poured in from every quarter to the last of these mistaken and deluded Princes, having led him to a belief, that the voice of the people was really in his favour, and that his credit was such, that he might set Parliaments at defiance, he rashly rushed on his own destruction ; for the eyes of the nation being opened, the most eager and warm of these

these addressers saw their error, and stopped short on the edge of the gulph into which they had nearly plunged themselves and their country ; and having felt the danger, joined their hearts and hands with the rest of the nation to bring about that glorious Revolution, which having marked and defined the bounds of prerogative and liberty, will, I trust, keep them for ever so strictly within them, that this danger can never come so near again, however some weak and ill-advised Minister may, for his own base ends and purposes, endeavour to produce it. For though the Constitution, by the Revolution seemed to be fixed on a most immovable basis, yet attempts have been made to shake it, and will, while human nature is what human nature ever has been, and ever will be, productive of ignorant, giddy, desperate, bad Ministers, as well as informed, able, good ones ; and also while these are what ought and what must be principles of prerogative and liberty : but it becomes you to take care that these principles move in parallel lines, without encroaching on each other, ever attentive to punish the Minister who dares to extend one beyond the other, be it which it may. I need not point out to you how instantly on this great event, every circumstance possible to bless the mind and body flowed in, the rapid strides which literature, arts and sciences made ; they seemed to come at once to the very summit of perfection ; the
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extension of commerce, and the wealth, which, with all its attendants poured in without measure or bounds, while the fame of your arms made the name of an Englishman to be always connected with the attributes of credit, reputation, honour, and glory, wherever it was heard, from that happy period till the peace of Paris, with only one small interruption at the close of the reign of Queen Anne, when an attempt was made to extend prerogative by the restoration of the House of Stuart, and to exchange these blessings for the curses which had always followed that unhappy despotic race; but Providence interposed, and saved us from the contrivers of this infamous and iniquitous project, who were hurled from their power, and the state rescued from the greatest peril it ever can be placed in, from the hands of a high prerogative and despotic ministry; for this I hold an incontrovertible truth, that Great-Britain can never be destroyed but by disorders from within. External wounds from foreign hands may make her languish for a time; but the strength and good habits of her Constitution will always heal these, if the internal peccant humours are not suffered to get the ascendant, and co-operate with the injuries she may receive from without.

Sorry am I to have been obliged to observe,
that the course of these blessings met a severe check
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in 1762; but the veracity from which no man at any time, but more particularly no man who addresses you in the public manner I do, ought for a moment to depart, constrains me to say so it was: And more sorry am I still to say, that national prosperity, including public credit, reputation, honour, dignity, glory, and private happiness, have been since that period every hour visibly and sensibly on the decline. From what cause this has proceeded, for I think there is but one, it is our business now to examine, not by abstruse logical reasoning or elaborate arguments, but by a simple enumeration of a few facts drawn from the history of the Constitution. It appears clearly, that national prosperity has risen or fallen in the ratio of the preservation of the balance of prerogative and liberty; and that in times past every declension of the scale on one side or the other (for I am no more a friend to liberty extended to licentiousness and anarchy than I am to prerogative extended to despotism) has been more or less, according to that declension, while it lasted, destructive of public prosperity and private happiness. We may fairly conclude, that the same causes which produced this effect in times antecedent to the present, may produce them now, and will in future. Now I think it will not be very difficult to shew, that attempts have been made, for twenty-two years past, to incline this balance strongly to one side; and that
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this has been productive of the long list of evils by which (however we may have shut our own eyes and endeavoured to impose upon ourselves, which is one of the great errors and misfortunes of the present day) it is too true we are all, both in our aggregate capacity and as individuals, at this time most heavily and grievously oppressed.

It is an unpleasant remark, but too true, that at this period opinions which had so repeatedly brought forth bitter consequences were revived: *That the interests of the Crown, and the interests of the people were separate and distinct: that Prerogative had been too much diminished; and that it ought to be recovered and restored to its former strength.*

It has been justly observed by one of our most able writers, that the Crown had lost somewhat in prerogative, but gained much more than an equivalent (by various circumstances attendant on the state of the country) in influence. The supporters of the doctrines I have just mentioned, were not of this sentiment; and not admitting that the influence gained was an equivalent for the prerogative lost, framed a system, by which, without relinquishing one atom of this influence, prerogative was notwithstanding to be reinstated, and exalted as high, if not higher, than it had ever been; a system in the conception most wicked, in the execution

cution most pernicious. For to it, and it alone, are justly to be attributed all the losses, disgraces, discontents at home, dishonours abroad, decrease of public credit, public prosperity and private happiness, which have been accumulating on our devoted heads from the first formation of this plan. Between influence and prerogative there is a vast difference. Influence, leading only by the mild operations of persuasion and seduction, may be, and by strong minds often is resisted : but prerogative, armed with the mighty power of coercion, commands and is irresistible. In a Constitution, of which a certain degree of virtue is a principle, and where education and example have steered the minds of men to fortitude, influence frequently misses its aim, and therefore is less to be dreaded ; but when influence and prerogative are united, and exert their different powers to attack on every side, opposition is vain, and conquest certain. Whoever were the contrivers of this indeed horrid Coalition, were the bitterest enemies of their country : and such they were who, for their own execrable views, finding Great-Britain on the heights of both prosperity and glory before unknown, by secret practices insensibly drew her from them, and placed her on the edge of an abyss, which we are now afraid to look down ; and, by our own fears and pusillanimity, growing every day more and more incapable of saving her from ruin. That she
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did stand on these heights at this period, cannot be disputed, by whoever will reflect, that the marine power of the whole House of Bourbon was annihilated, and she rode sovereign and sole arbitress in all seas, and that the brilliancy and utility of her conquests, for they were here united, had in every quarter of the globe dazzled all mankind; and they who happened to be as I was, at that time, in a foreign country, must remember with pleasure (though now, alas! mixed with regret, that it is no more) the respect, the almost adoration with which we were received, owing to the lustre and dignity of the country, to which we had the honour to belong. I have said of utility, as well as brilliancy, because then conquests were not idle empty victories over uncultivated plains or barren sands, but acquisitions of fruitful provinces and rich territories, from which commerce was to draw inexhaustible resources of wealth and power, and all those circumstances attendant on them to bless mankind, while union in councils guided by ministers, to whom the whole nation looked up with reverence for their abilities and love, for the uses to which they applied them, presaged a long duration; this was Great-Britain. What she is, *Quantum mutata ab illa!* it will be our grief soon to see. The first step the fiends, envious of this great, glorious, happy situation took, was to endeavour to instil into the mind of the youth-

ful unsuspecting prince, who had lately succeeded to the crown, jealousies of those ministers, who have been the authors of it, as being of principles inimical to monarchy, and leaning too strongly to popular favour and democracy: young, and still more virtuous minds are most susceptible of such impressions; never was there a prince or a man endued with more truly amiable qualities to be the father of his people, or the father of a private family; the first appeared from those acts at the opening of his reign, which were the pure emanations of his undirected and unbiassed mind; the latter, every hour of his life has evinced: yet these qualities, and all his strength of mind, could not defend him against their machinations, and when they had made the seats of these ministers too uneasy, and too dangerous also for them to continue in, they insinuated that the retirement, which their arts had made it impossible for the ministers not to make, was an indisputable proof of their disaffection to his service. This was followed by a peace so disgraceful to their country, that being received by the Parliament, and people at large, with the strongest marks of disapprobation, as coming infinitely short of what, with such power in their hands after such success, they thought they had a right to expect; that it proved, what a peace is apt to prove, a rock on which weak ministers almost always split, and they quitted their posts,

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but they did not relinquish their power; and from this source of SECRET INFLUENCE have flowed those bitter waters, which have poisoned all the land, bringing down in their noxious streams more losses in wealth, and more disgraces in reputation, than this country had ever known, and making within a few short years the name of an Englishman to be received abroad with ridicule and contempt, in exchange for the admiration and respect which I have truly related, had for some time universally accompanied it. Such have ever been, and ever will be, the consequences of high prerogative principles; for in them were the foundations laid, supported secretly by those who dare not openly avow them. In carrying these principles into effect, the next thing the supporters of them undertook was, a plan worthy their great master Machiavel himself, to weaken, loosen, and shake asunder the bands of faith and confidence, by which the leaders of different parties had always considered themselves bound; and by fomenting doubts, distrusts, and jealousies, every man was made suspicious of his former friends. This was done by a rapid succession of administrations*, composed of men of jarring interests and discordant principles,

* In five years there were nine Secretaries of State; four First Lords of Treasury; five First Lord Admirals; five First Lords of Trade.

principles, appointed one day, and dismissed the next, and this under the specious pretext, that a prince, a native of this country, being now upon the throne, and all ideas of bringing in a Pretender done away, there was not any longer any distinction of parties, shewing their ignorance of the Constitution, in which, before the names of either the House of Stuart or Hanover were known, Prerogative and Liberty, as I have before observed, were coeval with and essential parts of a mixed and compounded government. But the real object was, to bring ministers of every description into such disrepute and general contempt, by weakness, arising from want of connexion and support, that whatever prince chose it, might be his own minister, and in fact absolute. For as he is personally deemed incapable of wrong, there being no minister, there would be no responsibility, and where there is no responsibility, there could be no check nor controul; a project perhaps tending more surely and fatally to the ruin of this country than had ever before been conceived; that the prince then, and now on the throne, never entertained such an idea, nor saw the full scope of their design, no body has the slightest doubt, but certain it is, that this was the plan of those who abused his confidence. From this fluctuation and unsteadiness of councils, no regular steady system of government could be formed; and that there is not, a
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recollection of the events of the last twenty-two years will shew ; and a very recent act, militating directly against this, will more strongly, in a short time shew, that no good, but the greatest evil must be the sure and unavoidable result: one week the minister of that week adopted taxation of America, next week their successors renounce it ; another week renew it, and it was to be enforced by compulsion another week, and another administration were sure they could effect it by persuasion: our neighbours, and all the world saw and laughed at our folly, suffering us to go on, till we should get into inextricable confusion and difficulty, in which we were to sink, and on our wreck they were to rise ; and the event justified the wisdom of their foresight and prudence of their conduct. For when Great Britain was thought to be sufficiently embarrassed and weakened, they who lay in wait for her destruction, sallied forth and attacked her on every side, and though by a brave resistance, and by such exertions and efforts as no country ever made, nor no country otherways constituted could have made, she weathered the storm: yet how is she to come into port? her rigging torn and lost, her stores and guns thrown over-board, and gone a wreck scarce able to swim ; for let us attempt to impose on ourselves as we will, such she is, and such she has been, in the course of the pernicious councils, and projects of those
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who risked her very being to establish prerogative in America, as a prelude to the extension and then firm establishment of prerogative in Great Britain ; and though they have failed in the one, yet, that they are not discouraged from pursuing the other, I think, will fully appear when we have examined the late political transactions.

From this summary review, I think it appears, that the season for the attempt to throw too much weight into either scale, has not hitherto been the season of national prosperity ; and when we consider the loss of such vast dominions, of the exclusive trade we enjoyed with them, but must now at best have only, and perhaps a small share of the enormity of our debt, the diminution of our financial credit and political reputation, the heavy pressure of taxes to support our tottering existence, the rise of the naval power of our enemies to much above ours, which are all to be dated from the time of the projected preponderance of the prerogative scale, shall we endeavour still to encrease this weight, and yet, strange to think and to say, is not this now more openly avowed than ever ? Nay, even not excepting in the Tory administration, already taken notice of in the last years of Queen Anne, a period bearing so strong a resemblance in all its features to the present, that it seems the very model we are labouring exactly to copy ;
and

and notwithstanding the example of which, and the danger then so very narrowly escaped. Is it not more strange to believe and see, that you yourselves, people of Great-Britain, have been lately deceived, and infatuated to take part and league yourselves with prerogative, at open war with your own privileges, rights and liberties? And that this is not a bare assertion, is what I am now to endeavour to prove, and the mode I am to take is, that (as you have disapproved of, in the strongest terms, one set of ministers, and in as strong approved of others) to examine the public actions of each when in office; as from the actions of men alone can their principles be ascertained; and then, as it may be presumed, that your principles are similar to, and congenial with the principles of the men you approve, I shall attain my first object, the knowledge of the principles on which you have lately acted, and which you will pardon me if I say, I do not believe at the time you were yourselves all thoroughly acquainted with.

The end of the American war brought almost necessarily a revolution in political systems, and a change of Ministers. The Administration then formed comprized many men of the first abilities, and the most truly constitutional principles, and some also, from unavoidable causes in the then state of public affairs, much the reverse; but the

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weight and strength being with the former class, great things were expected from it. But its duration was short, and the death of one of the principal members of it brought on a dissolution, which without that would not have been very remote, *because the principles of the majority of it were known to be inimical to the principles of the secret Junto, and in full opposition to their plan*, and a new Ministry was formed, from which all men of this description were excluded, composed only of those either holding avowed prerogative tenets*, or of such pliant tempers and dispositions as (allured also by the bait of places and employments so vastly above any their imaginations, in their most sportive fancies, could represent as likely to fall to their lot) would immediately and blindly adopt them, though in direct and open contradiction to the whole tenor of their former lives and conduct. Their reign was little longer than that of their predecessors, but from causes widely different: for the first were got rid of by the secret Junto, on account of their principles; the latter, you yourselves, who were not then seized with the fatal madness which has since infected you, shook, terrified and confounded, from their seats, on account of the wonderful astonishing incapacity they had manifested in the management of your most interesting and important concerns in the treaties of Versailles; and as the principal members

* LORD SHELBURNE'S Speech in the House of Lords.

members of the Administration you then discarded are the principal members of the Administration you have been the means of restoring to power, and lately so much your favorites; and as this act may justly be considered as the act of the present Ministry, in order to see in which case you have most followed the dictates of dispassionate reason, solid judgment, and sound prudence, it may not be wrong to take some notice of it here, though it may appear to come more under the second head of my enquiry, that is, into the motives of your conduct, as relative more to their abilities in the discharge of the duties of the offices you have committed to their care, than to their principles: Yet, as in what I propose farther to offer to your consideration in these Letters, these will be so blended, that they must go to explain each other, I hope I may be permitted to make my observations upon actions and principles promiscuously, especially as I profess to write to you not methodically, but to submit my ideas to you as they arise; I shall, therefore, without any farther preamble, make a few observations on those parts of these, the most extraordinary treaties made by this island since the time of Julius Cæsar, and on which you founded your disapprobation of the makers of them.

The first treaty I shall take notice of is that with France, and I beg to direct your attention strongly

to, what I am not afraid boldly to assert, the most important point which ever came under the consideration of a British negotiator, the fishery on the coasts of Newfoundland. The fourth or fifth articles of the treaty with France, contain an alteration of the places in which the French had a right to fish, and the cession of the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, IN FULL RIGHT: If this alteration and this cession were considered by the Ministers of England as equivalents, they damned their characters for abilities for ever; for this ignorance of the local circumstances, and their value, is beyond what could be expected in a child of ten years old, who had once read any book of geography. If this ignorance did not exist, but that knowing the nature and value of these situations, they in this most material point gave them up, and held forth as an equal acquisition the restraint of fishing between Capes Bonavista and St. John, they damned their character for honesty and integrity beyond redemption; and when they dared to tell you, they had indeed parted with some of your possessions, but had taken care to get a VALUABLE CONSIDERATION, they treated you as idiots whom they could impose upon, lead and persuade as they pleased. The fact is strictly and literally this: The fishery from Cape Bonavista to Cape St. John, is not worth a farthing a year, for this incontrovertible reason, that there are no fish in those parts. What then is the worth of

of a right to dry fish, where none are to be caught so near as not to be spoiled before they can be brought on shore? They therefore have given you NOTHING, for which mighty gift what have you given them? A right to fish on the coasts of, and dry fish on the two islands immediately and closely surrounded by the best fishing banks in the world, and on Cape Ray, which is so near to them, that they can go to the banks and return to the shore while the fish are in the highest state of preservation. I could bring many more arguments from the different depths of the seas, the nature of the climates and the fogs, in the different parts; but that I think you sufficiently see, that no treaty ever exhibited two such articles of one of two things, either knavery or folly complete, or that any Ministers ever exhibited such instances of (I must speak as I sincerely feel) impudence in themselves, and unprecedented superiority of contempt of you, as when they defended this transaction in Parliament; or when, after having by this one act given away the most valuable articles, both of COMMERCE AND MARINE STRENGTH, this country ever possessed, they dared, in the face of the world, to say it was right. You all remember so well what was said of the Ministers who first gave any right of fishing in these parts by the Treaty of Utrecht, that it is needless to repeat it; but you will observe, that the Prerogative Ministers who made this cession to

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OBTAIN a peace, had evidently the same object with the Ministers who made this so much greater cession, the gratification of their own ambition, by the preservation of their places, and that they were both disappointed. In the article of the cession of the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, it seemed obvious how very material it was to have had the most absolute security against fortifications on them, and yet it was not only not mentioned, but in truth tacitly allowed, because THEY ARE CEDED IN FULL RIGHT, without one syllable of prohibition or restraint.

Somewhat similar to this, but in a very inferior degree, as the object is of a very inferior nature, is the article relative to Africa; but the conduct of the Ministers was exactly the same, for they have yielded much and received little; neither the gum trade, so necessary to manufacture, nor the slave trade, on which the West-Indies depend, will hereafter be of much value, for they are held at their will; they alone have the power and strength in the country, for this humiliating article leaves you the shadow only, or the name.

In the exchanges and restrictions in the West-Indies, the case is not quite so bad: Yet even there they have admitted in every point the balance against you; and the papers laid before the House
of

of Commons, on motions for that purpose, relative to the nature and state of the trade (too numerous and too large to be here recited) have clearly shewn how little they understood, or how little they consulted COMMERCIAL INTEREST.

In the East-Indies they have given every thing, and received literally NOT ONE in exchange; and to secure the possession, in future, of the liberal gifts now made to them, and crown the work, they are allowed to FORTIFY Chandenagore, for fortified it will be, by your express leave and permission. The words a ditch ROUND a place to CARRY OFF water, are nonsense; a cut STRAIT may be of use to CARRY OFF water, a ditch ROUND can answer no purpose but TO RETAIN IT.

If in the treaty with France there have been some humiliating articles, in that with Spain there is but one, and that the most trifling which is not so, for except this one, they are all cessions. They gave up Minorca, and with it the whole Mediterranean trade. It is true, much of that trade had been lost by mismanagement; but as true, that by good management it might have been recovered to great extent and great profit. It is now gone for ever; for without a port to receive ships of force, necessary to protect a trade in seas surrounded by your enemies, it cannot exist. Gibraltar is of no
value

value as a post: It may be an object of vanity, but I am not ashamed to declare my opinion, because it is founded on good ground, that it is of expensive, barren, empty vanity, while Minorca was an object of solid utility. In the West-Indies they have renounced a claim always made by Great Britain, and never before admitted against her, of an unbounded, unlimited trade in logwood in all parts, and in lieu have accepted, as a grace, the permission to cut logwood in a narrow, confined, unproductive and unhealthy shore, dependent on the good pleasure of the haughty, overbearing Spaniard; for you must not have the shadow of a fortification to protect your merchants or your workmen. Read the cautious manner in which the Spanish Ministers worded this article, and the manner in which the British Ministers suffered the article relative to St. Pierre and Miquelon to be drawn, and with-hold your indignation if you can. They have yielded East and West Florida as of no value; for this I appeal to their firm friend that steady Patriot, who when Governor of these Provinces, in his public declaration, represented them as a Paradise of the most fruitful soil, in the most healthy, happy climate: For all this what have they got in return? The barren Bahama rocks, not worth even their acceptance, but to impose on the ignorant by the name of SOMETHING.

In

In the American Treaty there are two striking features, which evidently mark that neither COMMERCIAL INTEREST, nor NAVAL POWER had any place in their minds; for by the boundaries granted to the Americans, they have shut you out from the countries which supply the great articles of furs, with which you must now be furnished by them, and the balance of this trade be unavoidably and grossly against you; and also from the most valuable of all productions, masts, yards, pitch and tar, without which your NAVY has not an hour of CERTAIN EXISTENCE, and for which you are at this moment dependent on them, now a foreign power, or some other foreign power, who are enabled, at any time, by with-holding them, to put an end to both the TRADE and the FLEET of Great Britain, without even striking a blow. The next respects the fishery, in which ignorance or knavery are perhaps more conspicuous than in what I have mentioned in the treaty with France; for by the proximity of their situation they can have got their cargoes, and be with them at the market, as early as you can arrive at the place where yours are to be provided.

That a good peace was a blessing eagerly to be fought for, I shall not for a moment call in question; but that this peace bears any resemblance to good, or that we were under any thing like a ne-

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cessity

cessity of accepting it at the moment we did, I
 absolutely deny. If a weak and reduced state was
 an unanswerable reason for accepting peace on any
 terms, we should have taken it at the breaking out
 of the war with France, for that was the time of
 our lowest depression, and the terms could not pos-
 sibly have been worse, for we could not have given
 more than ALL, nor got less than NOTHING: But
 when, by the noblest efforts and exertions, we had
 risen from this depression to be equal, if not supe-
 rior to our enemies, then we sue for and accept
 such ignominious and ruinous terms, as we cannot
 (holding the worst opinions of the understanding
 of our Ministers) reasonably, fairly and candidly
 attribute to any thing but the preference of private
 views and advantages to public good. It has been
 often remarked, that what advantages we have
 gained in the field, (we always lost in the cabinet :
 that is, that our negociators are inferior in mental
 qualifications and abilities ; a quaint saying, often
 repeated, generally makes an impression, and men
 are too apt to give their assent to propositions, fre-
 quently inculcated in a tone of authority, without
 taking time to weigh and judge of their truth. I
 think this the case with this, and I cannot find any
 founded substantial reason to agree to the negocia-
 torial incapacity or inferiority of my countrymen.
 Among the treaties of peace of the present century,
 three are peculiarly marked, and bear the strongest
 resemblance

resemblance to each other in their causes and effects; the treaties of peace of Utrecht, Paris and Versailles, on a view of them, *prima facie*, it certainly appears that this maxim is true. In the two first, from the superiority in which we stood, we had the clearest right to expect much more than we got, and that we did not was attributed to inferiority of abilities, and want of skill; but to judge whether this was really so, let us look at the principles, the characters, and the object of the peace-makers: I do not mean the Earl of Strafford, nor the Bishop of Bristol, nor the Duke of Bedford; for they, let their situation as to rank or abilities be as it may, were literally only the clerks of office, to put their names to the specific articles they were commanded to sign, but of those who composed the cabinet from whence the mandates issued. For the peace of Utrecht were they not in principle the highest Church, highest Tory, and highest Prerogative men, in character scarce concealed Jacobites, labouring to restore the despotic house of Stuart, and exclude the house of Brunswick; their sole object was to gratify their ambition by securing their posts, which nothing could give them a chance for but a peace, concluded before the death of the Queen, whose health was so precarious, that they were greedy to subscribe to conditions, not such as they themselves thought good, but any which they could get in the most expeditious manner. Between

these and the makers of the peace of Paris, in principles, characters and object, there is scarce a shade of difference, and as is natural, their works exhibit the strongest resemblance to each other; and if the peace of Versailles shews features in nothing unlike those of the others, except in being more distorted, more deformed, and more hideous to look upon, may we not think there is as little difference in principles, characters and object of the authors as of their works? and that therefore, whatever were the abilities of the negociators, the effect must have been the same? I will admit in this, what I shall not in every other part of their conduct, that the qualities of the heart were here more to be condemned than those of the head.

Though this letter has gone to a much greater length than I intended, yet having (somewhat peremptorily) asserted, that there was nothing like a necessity for accepting peace at the moment we did, I must beg leave, before I conclude, to submit to you my reasons for it. There is a peculiar circumstance, I think, not sufficiently noticed, though it has been noticed in Parliament, attending a mere naval war with the House of Bourbon, that by the constitution of their country, in two points, a register of seamen, and a power and a readiness, at all times, to sacrifice their whole trade, *pro tempore*, to man their fleet, that allow them only ships, and they

they can fit out that fleet, and be at sea much sooner than we can, who have not that register, but obstinately persist in refusing to adopt any measure of that sort, and who cannot, for various reasons, put, even for a short time, a stop, or give any delay to our* trade. That this is not an assertion without proof, is clearly within the knowledge of every man, of what passed at the opening of the late war, and of the inglorious, or to give it its true term, the disgraceful manner in which the once-proud sovereign of the sea was so long obliged to carry it on, before she could bring herself on any thing like a par with her enemy. This was just accomplished, our fleets were nearly equal to theirs in number, in quality of ships and men much superior; the spirit and ardour of the officers and men at the highest pitch. Coolly: Was this the moment meanly to sue for humiliating terms of peace? By time and great expence, the navy had been brought to this state; but the time was passed, the expence incurred, the alternative before us was, should we take the advantage we had with so great cost and labour obtained, or throw it away? Should we by one blow*, in which, circumstanced as we were, we were

* Let not any caviller suppose I mean the destruction of their whole navy could have been probably effected in one action; but in one Summer, it was more than probable, their navy and their trade must have been in the same situation they were after the defeat of Conflans.

were morally sure of destroying their marine, and their trade then unprotected: do it, and become masters of a glorious and advantageous peace, AND OF LONG DURATION; or, leaving their marine in its full force, and duped by designing men, for private ends, accept of an inglorious and a ruinous one, and leave it in their power to begin a new war, with the advantages they always have at the beginning of a war now vastly increased, from the improvement of their trade, by our weak injudicious concessions, and by having gone out of this with a navy in a condition so superior to what they ever had? If at the close of the war before this, they had not a ship fit to appear at sea, and yet were enabled to come out, as they did, with such force at the beginning of this, what must be the case, when they have carried into their harbours such fleets, which they are, with the greatest application, diligence and cost, every hour enlarging and improving, while we (let our hireling newspapers tell us what they will) are neither keeping pace with them, nor coming near them? Strange as it will in future appear, for the sake of getting peace at any rate, this was what the Ministers chose; and the argument they used to dazzle your eyes, was the expence and the inability to raise money to carry on the war. Be it observed, the expence was already incurred; the time necessary to accomplish this great work one campaign. In a new war, will one campaign,

campaign, weak and unarmed as you will then be, be sufficient? Will the expence of raising men be inferior to keeping those already raised one year more? No. Many saw it and said it; but the word œconomy was in that hour a talisman irresistible, which no reason nor argument could withstand. In private life, the man who would refuse a shilling to-day, by which he might save a thousand pounds to-morrow, and that thousand pounds, perhaps, not sufficient to guard him from the evil which will then impend, would be called an idiot. Is a nation in the same situation wiser? Have those who persuade a state to act so, any thing justly called wisdom? But in truth you are yourselves in fault, and when the mischief comes, the blame must be at your doors; for in time of peace and profound tranquility, when danger is at a distance, you are brave to an extreme, but withal so œconomical, that you will not part with the shilling to keep danger even at that amiable distance, but let war return; let the word invasion be sounded in your ears, and your courage and your œconomy are both gone; terror and prodigality have taken their places, and your whole fortunes are at the disposal of any whom you think can protect you. Is this charge exaggerated? Has not the truth of it, in the late war, been clearly and strongly exemplified? The Ministers had cunning enough (for in some things the children of darkness are as wise

wife as the children of light) to see this weakness, and to use it for their own bad purposes. As to the inability of getting money, it does not come within any part of my plan to enter into financial calculations, to shew that that ability did not exist: It certainly did not. The resources of this country are very great; and though to men of narrow and confined understandings, as very recent experience has shewn us, not visible; to those of enlarged minds and true abilities, they are easy and clear, and this, I trust, a short time will evince.

I know, that as to the necessity of making peace at all, at that moment, I differed in opinion from some of the greatest and ablest characters this or any country has ever seen, and I have still the presumption to think I was not wrong; and will freely say, that if my voice could have had any weight, it should have been employed to deprecate making ANY PEACE, without one more effort to use the great strength we then had in our hands, for such more than probable national advantages, and never to have submitted to the ignominy and ruin of SUCH A PEACE as this we have now been considering, while Britain had an arm to wield a sword, or a single ship to swim.

This peace drove the Ministers from their OSTENSIBLE situation; but in imitation of the great example

example set them by the makers of the peace of Paris, their SECRET influence and power remained in full vigour. The public acts of those who succeeded them, and their own acts previous to, and since their return to their posts, I mean to make the subject of my next letter.

ALFRED.

G

LETTER

L E T T E R II.

Magna est Veritas, et prevalebit.

THE disapprobation with which the peace of Versailles was received, even by those who were the most violent against the continuation of the war, forced the makers of it to what at the time they well knew to be only a temporary retreat from ostensible employments; and though well assured of this, they quitted them with inexpressible and indecent reluctance (having kept, during their struggle to retain them, the nation for many weeks in the utmost confusion at a most critical time) and retired to their posts behind the curtain.—The ministry which succeeded them was composed of two bodies of men, who, having differed on ONE great point, had been in opposition to each other. Against this ministry you yourselves declared war, and the grounds of your dislike of them were three, the union of two sets of men who had once been disunited, which was represented as a prodigy in Nature, *Monstrum horrendum*

dum ingens; the Tax on Receipts, which was said to be brought into the world by ignorance of finance, nursed by oppression of the poor, and which must soon be starved for want of production; and the India Bill, which was pronounced in a voice which went to the extremities of the earth, for a noble Lord said, it was a violation of the sacred rights, robbery of property, and shameful encrease of influence, placed in the MOST IMPROPER HANDS. These were the principal public acts of that administration: I will, as concisely as possible examine them separately, and compare them with the public acts of that administration, which you took so much pains to bring into their places, in order to find, if possible, my second object, the motives to your conduct on this occasion.

I will begin with the first of these, which was christened, I think, either by a worthy member for Surry, or a worthy member for Tewksbury (I am heartily sorry I cannot precisely ascertain which, because it leaves room for the places of their birth to contend as long as the cities of Greece, which I believe have not yet decided, for the birth of Homer, for the honour of having produced the godfather who gave the name) THE HORRID COALITION, a word which has lost its original signification, and by the eloquence of the

sponsor, whoever he was, acquired one of much greater force, being now what Shakespear calls

A word of fear,
Unpleasing to a courtly ear,

and used, as Marlborough is in France, to terrify noisy troublesome children.

At the time of the formation of this coalition, you will please to observe, there were three distinct bodies of men, who had ranged themselves with three different leaders; one with Lord North was composed of men experienced in business; their leader has been accused of being a friend of influence; I shall not contradict it; it has never been my lot to have seen, heard, or read of any minister, who, in some degree, was not, even to the minister of the present day. If there can be proved to be such amongst them, let him throw the first stone; but he was never accused of being a friend of high prerogative; the first may wound the Constitution slightly, the latter alone can stab it to the heart, and in crimes,

Optimus ille, qui minimis urgetur.

He and his connexions might justly be called moderate Whigs.

Another, with the Duke of Portland and Mr. Fox, carried their principles of Whiggism and your rights

rights somewhat farther; they had distinguished themselves by many attempts, in some of which, by great perseverance, they had succeeded, for reformation of abuses, national œconomy, and decrease of influence, which had certainly got to too great a head. Whether, in the warmth of their zeal, they did not go too far, and in some points abolish where they should only have corrected, may be a question for future discussion; but if it were an error, it was on the right side, and shewed the sincerity of their professions for your service.

The third, under Lord Shelburne, was at first very small and very inconsiderable. It had been formed, as Atheists say the world was, by chance, and a fortuitous concurrence of atoms. Those who composed it were in principles diametrically opposite to the last, and supported those doctrines relative to the long dormant, and seldom, if ever, not unhappily used, negative in the executive branch of the legislature, and all those high prerogative principles; which, when their leader in Parliament openly avowed, filled the sober part of the nation with astonishment and terror.

The man the least informed of the political state of his country must have known, that if these three parties continued to stand aloof from each other,

other, and each of them pursue a different system and plan, that there was an utter impossibility of carrying on the business of the nation. You were in a nice and delicate situation; the Preliminaries of Peace were signed, but the Definitive Treaties not; relying on the faith of your enemies a great deal more than was wise, your ministers had already began an alteration of the war establishment, and yet a small difficulty, a mere punctilio, might have forced you into war again. To have delayed one instant, to give the nation some species of government, might have been fatal, and the conduct of the late ministers (for though they filled their posts, they did no ministerial acts) which I have already mentioned, in the efforts to keep those posts, was a crime not to be passed over nor forgiven, and more deserving punishment than three parts in four of those, for which ministers had been impeached and condemned. It was necessary then, for the forming a government, to have a union between two of these parties; which should they be? between those whose principles came nearest to each other, being fundamentally the same, and differing only in the degree of strength each would have given, which was the case of the two first; or between those whose principles were as opposite, and as impossible to bring together, as the poles of the earth, as incompatible as fire and water, heaven and hell, which was the case

case of the two last ; and yet, in the state of intoxication in which you were last Spring, the junction between the latter would have been your choice ; but now the gusts of passion and prejudice are blown over, and the serenity of your minds and judgments restored, which if I did not believe, I should not give myself the trouble of writing, nor you of reading this letter. I am convinced you would pronounce this Coalition, between light and darkness, a HORRID one indeed, and reprobate it in terms, if possible, stronger than you did the other. But the great cry was, and it began in the House of Commons, from whence it quickly spread over the whole nation, against a union between two men, Lord North and Mr. Fox, who had been in opposition on ONE particular point, from whence the wise and charitable conclusion was drawn ; that though that point of difference was removed for ever, opposition and enmity ought to be eternal. Had there been an union between Lord North and Mr. Fox, while one was supporting, and the other opposing the American war, on principles in the highest degree discordant, the censure would have been just. If a pilot fleers a vessel committed to his care among rocks and sands, and into imminent danger, the crew have undoubtedly a right to drive him from the helm ; but if, when this danger is past, and he cannot bring them into it again, they obstinately
deprive

deprive themselves, in ill-judging anger, of the service of a very able and experienced seaman, in other parts of his duty, would not their conduct be deemed highly absurd? That an immediate union between two parties was of absolute necessity for the preservation of the State, and that in respect to concordance of principles and public utility, there could have been no union, but of these, appears a proposition as convincing and clear as any demonstrated in Euclid.

Before I take notice of the two other disapproved parts of the conduct of this administration, I beg leave just to observe, that though you did not express any disapprobation, you did the next thing; you did not express any approbation, but passed over in profound and sullen silence (the poison you had taken just then beginning to operate) their first acts after they came into office, the bringing to perfection, and carrying into execution, what they had attempted in vain before they had power, the reduction of that weight of influence, which, as it then stood, had given to the Crown much more than it had lost in prerogative, destroying thereby the equitability of the balance, and by secret means inclining it from its just poize, by excluding from seats in the House of Commons a certain description of men, who had been supposed most operated upon by that influence,

influence, and from votes in elections for members of that House, persons holding such places and employments, as seemed to place them in most immediate independence on a minister; by which they fondly imagined they testified their attention to your interest, and that, as they had acquired their power by your favour, they desired to hold it by the same tenure, not conceiving that while they, on their best judgement, consulted only your interest, caprice and prejudice, stirred up by men of high prerogative principles, in eternal warfare with that interest, should warp your understandings to desert them, and betray your own cause.

The first thing objected to, after the Coalition, was the Receipt Tax; and as, in a comparative view, I mean to make some observations, not only on this, but some other taxes, I wish, in the first place, permission to define what are, in my humble opinion, necessarily constituent parts of a good tax, by which, if my ideas are true, we shall be able to judge what taxes do, or do not, come under that denomination. A good tax should be perfectly clear and intelligible to the meanest capacity; for as those of that description make generally a great part of those who are to pay, if it be not so, it is a snare for them, exposing them to penalties often more than proportioned to the offence, for which the framer deserves high censure. It

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should

should be as little liable to evasion as possible; for else the public are mocked and deceived, while they think they are diminishing a debt which on the contrary is increasing. It should give little trouble, and employ little time; for time is the most valuable commodity to the greatest number of the contributors to Taxes. It should be kept perfectly clear from affecting, in the remotest degree, industry, labour, and manufacture; for if it does not, it is mockery again counteracting itself, and at the time it is calling for payment taking away the means of making it; and above all, it should be very comprehensive. A tax may almost at once be pronounced good which effects its purpose, by taking a small sum from a great many, and BAD which takes a large sum from a few. One extensive tax, comprizing all who ought to contribute, is preferable to twenty small taxes, taking in only a few. Nothing can be worse than a tax which affects one man, and leaves his neighbour exempt; for such must create jealousy and repugnance in the person singled out, and add to the burthen of reality the burthen of imagination; and lastly, influence, by increase of collectors, clerks, &c. should be strictly guarded against.

The arguments against the Receipt Tax will, now the clouds of prejudice are dispersed, appear very extraordinary, and excite wonder at their having made any impression. They are so ridiculous

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lous, so contradictory, so untrue, that I feel repugnance in recalling them to your memory from the shame they must raise in your minds for the credit you gave to them. One was, that the operation was too extensive, and comprehended a number who were not fit subjects for taxation. If this last part had been true, there could not have been a more proper reason for complaint; but it was absolutely false, and yet generally believed. And it is remarkable, that in the instructions sent from many places to their members to oppose this tax, how few of those who signed the instructions understood the effect; for it was stated as highly oppressive on the lower orders of the people, who were little able to pay, whereas that order was totally exempt; and never was there a tax offered which preserved the ratio of ability to payment so exactly: and yet, after it had been printed and published, I saw instructions from a borough to their members to vote for a repeal, signed by one hundred and sixty persons, of whom I knew not more than five, if so many, who could in any degree be affected by it. Another was, that it was nugatory, as it would not be productive. I have on this only to refer to your experience for your present opinion of the veracity of those who held this language, with design to impose upon you. I cannot help observing here, how very uncandid and unfair many members of the present

administration were in regard to this Tax. In order to dispel the clamours against it without doors, it was wished to shew how unanimous the House of Commons was in its approbation of it, and the persons I have alluded to were frequently called upon to speak honestly their opinions, but in vain. They are not remarkable for very compliant dispositions, and they sat wrapped up in sulky taciturnity: for they did not dare to express dislike to a tax, which they well knew would, like the stream, as it ran, refine and purge away all objections; at the same time they wished to encourage the wide breeze which had sprung up against it, till it should blow a storm, in which they succeeded. Try this tax by the rules of good taxation; compare it with any of the taxes imposed the last sessions, and, on your own decision, I will rest the character of the two financiers: And yet for this tax did you, O men of York! reject your former member, whom, "take him for all in all, you ne'er shall look upon his like again," and place in his seat a "man as little like to him as I to Hercules."

The next thing, which carried your indignation to its highest pitch, was the India Bill; and if ever a vast body of people were the dupes of a few, and by that few made the tools of their avarice and ambition, it was on this occasion. I will not lead you into the immense labyrinth of East Indian affairs

fairs, which it is impossible one in ten thousand of you could understand, but wish to direct your attention to a very few points, which every man of the least information, or the meanest capacity, can. There is scarce one of you who has not repeatedly heard of the long practised tyranny of Governors, and the rapine and cruelty of individuals, by which immense fortunes have been rapidly raised. No means of extortion were rejected, if money could be got : and if in Europe we hear, with horror; of one murder committed by a wretch perhaps starving, what must we feel when thousands are made to perish in the bitterest dilatory agonies of famine, caused by monopolies, to add to the already enormous mass of the wealth of one man ! but these, and many other acts, I shall not recal to your memory, as they are yet fresh in it. The name of an Englishman, heretofore the pride and just pride of every one man who bore it, was held in detestation throughout all the extended countries of the East. In mercy, justice, and honour, you were loudly called upon from every quarter of the world, to put the speediest end to these enormities ; and you had another usually not weak incitement, your interest in the trade of the East-Indies. I do not mean only the direct trade between those countries and England, but the collateral branches to all parts of the world, of by much the greatest consequence, of which that trade

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was the root without the nourishment, from which those branches must starve and die ; and still more your naval strength, which so much depends upon it. For the country powers were, as they could not be otherwise, so highly exasperated at these proceedings, which affected every man, great and small, rich and poor, prince and subject, that the extirpation of the English was their most favoured object. National vanity has long made us look with contempt on the Powers of India, ignorant and impotent in the extreme, when they first knew us ; we have ourselves taught and given them skill and force. The history of all ages, and all places tells us, that not only military abilities and knowledge, but national courage, which is a virtue of habit, is gained by example and practice, and every day was giving proofs of it here : besides, there were not wanting numbers of our European enemies always ready and active to blow up the flames, and direct them to effect. Our danger was, nay is at this moment, very great. For neither the peace of Versailles, nor that lately concluded in India, have yet given any of us stable security. Every argument, then, of private humanity ; every argument of political utility, urged strongly the necessity of the most speedy and most effectual remedies for these disorders, and prevention of their consequences. The measures hitherto taken had been so weak, that the evils had increased, not diminished, and

and the operations of the interior Cabinet and Secret Influence, leaving all the Administrations without stability or strength (two things essentially requisite at all times and in all places, but most here, on account of the distance, and many other obvious causes) the confusion became compleat; order was inverted; individuals exulted in their ill-gotten treasures; and in open defiance of the feeble bound-up hands of justice, laughed at the ideas of restitution or punishment; for their forces for defence were too numerous and powerful, and too well paid to leave any apprehensions from either attack or desertion. To oppose these, the utmost vigour and resolution were necessary. Half measures were reprobated; whole measures (these were the fashionable phrases of the day) that is measures of the greatest efficacy and strength, were called for by every party, by none more loudly than the present Minister, Mr. Pitt, and none more heartily concurred in this opinion than Mr. Fox, who saw that to leave the direction and Government of the East-Indies in any of the hands, which had always so grossly abused the trust, was nugatory; and that to cut the evils by the root, and prevent their springing any more, the instruments must not be again given to them, but to those who had spirit and inclination to use them strenuously, and to whom sufficient time should be allowed to bring the work to perfection. This was the out-
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line of the bill. The objections made to it were, That it was an unprecedented infringement of a charter; that it robbed the proprietors of their property, and made those in whose hands the management of East-Indian affairs was to be placed, independent, and above controul, for a certain time: that it was an infringement of a charter, I will admit; that is, that it was an alteration of a charter, which the misconduct of the holders of it had made of absolute and indispensable necessity; that such necessities may come, having had leisure for reflection, I believe few of you will at this time of day deny. If there should be such, I will beg them to consider what a charter literally is. It is a grant of privileges to certain persons, not for their private benefit alone, but for their benefit united and connected with that of the community, of which they form a part, and to which they are in the management of this trust the accountable servants. If they have been improvident, unfaithful, unjust, are they to be continued to be still so upon the wild sound, for idea there is none, that the taking this power out of their hands is a violation of what was never in any possible circumstance or case whatever to be violated. If five or six, or any number, of men, form a company to carry on any branch of trade, and enter into articles for the management of it for their mutual advantages: if one or more of these act contrary to

to this mutual advantage, they endanger not only great loss in that trade, but THE WHOLE OF THE REST OF THEIR FORTUNE. Are these articles to remain in force till they are ruined? If a man lets a farm to a tenant by lease for years, on stipulated conditions and payment of rent, if these conditions are not observed, the rent not paid, and the farm falling into decay, will not the law apply a remedy? and yet these articles of partnership, and this lease, are in fact charters. By what do we all, as members of society, hold all that is most dear and valuable to us, our liberties, our properties and our lives, but by a condition, which is a charter, that we do not employ any of them against the public good: Yet if we commit felony, treason, murder, are not our liberties restrained, our properties, &c. confiscated, our lives forfeited?—And where is the man bold enough to advance, that this great natural compact and charter is unjustly violated and infringed? What were the loudest vociferators on this occasion, your at that time favourite, Mr. Pitt, and his friends, declaring (for what was their real intention and wish is another question with me, for very good reason and knowledge, not a doubtful one) they would do, by a reform as they called it of Parliament, but take away, from a much more numerous body of men than the East-India Company, charters, of which they and their predecessors had been in possession for

for ages, and these not barely implied, but having all the forms and insignia of office, parchments, signatures, seals to corroborate and confirm them, and give them the fullest force, and this without even a crime proved, nay, not even a charge alledged. Are not all laws, all acts of Parliament, charters? and are not they altered, amended, or repealed every day.—I will bring but one more case, and that immediately in point. The South Sea Directors were called to account by Parliament, and many wise and as strong as any of these regulations made, without a shadow of murmur or complaint. I could produce many more instances of violation, that is alteration of charters (for here I beg to be understood once for all when I use the word violation, it is only because it was the word used on this occasion, but not in the sense it was then, as expressing illegality and wrong, but simply meaning change, amendment, and reform) against which not a whisper was heard. For they were not the watch-words to turn out one administration and place another in its room; but that these appear sufficient to remove the mist, on this point, from before the eyes of any reasonable reasoning men.

The next objection was, That it ROBBED the proprietors of their property, in ships, warehouses, merchandize, &c. &c. There never was, perhaps,
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any arguments so very extraordinary as this. It was taking advantage of your weakness in a manner that I did not think any man on earth daring enough to do. Let me ask you, in this hour of your returned reason, Is there one person weak enough to conceive for a moment, that these ships, warehouses, merchandizes, &c. &c. could have been disposed of for private emolument? When this wild argument was first started in Parliament, it struck me and many others with pity and contempt, more than any other sensation, for the intellects of the person who produced it, as too ridiculous to deserve an answer, and as impossible to make the slightest impression. But it was our intellects which deserved pity and contempt, for it did. You snatched it up eagerly, and ran away with it with such velocity, that reason could not overtake you. You would not bear to have it commented upon or explained. Are you enough recovered yet to permit me to state to you how the case did really stand? The Directors, that is the servants, to whom this property had been intrusted, for the benefit of the proprietors and the NATION AT LARGE, had grossly abused the trust. The Company was BANKRUPT; attempt to soften, palliate, modify, this as you will, it will not do. I say, and will maintain, literally BANKRUPT. If a private company of dealers merchants, or bankers, cannot pay their bills when due, they are bank-

rupt. What constitutes the difference in this point between a company of this sort and the East-India Company? There is none; none whatsoever. They confessed it, if not in these very words, in the the plainest, strongest sense. They came to Parliament; they did not use the word bankrupt, but they said, "we cannot pay our bills." Construe this; twist, turn, syllogize in all the quirks of Burgendicus, or any other logician, confound it by every mode and figure, it means nothing more or less than this, we are BANKRUPT. Whence did this arise? It arose in this case, as it would have done in the case of the private Company of Traders, either from misfortune or mismanagement. Was it the first? No man even hinted it. It was universally allowed to be the last. What was to be done? Remove the mismanagers from the direction of affairs, and commit it to others. But they are in possession of warehouses, ships, &c. &c. and to take them away will be ROBBERY! *risum teneatis!* When a certain number of Directors go out every year, and are succeeded by others, is not the property taken from the first, and vested in the latter, as much as it would have been by this bill? yet there never has been objection, nor clamour, nor the word ROBBERY, used on this occasion, because they would not have answered any private end. If any of these Companies of private Traders were in the same situation, as to bankruptcy, and should apply to
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the wisest and most experienced men they could find for advice, it would be this: Your servants and clerks have abused your confidence, and shamefully mismanaged your affairs; therefore you must dismiss them and appoint others. Would they say, no, we must not, for they are in possession of shops, warehouses, merchandize and cash, which, if you take from them, and give them to others, though they have no permanent, but only a temporary transferable property, given for our use, it will be ROBBERY. I do not believe they would make this answer; if they did, their lodgings should be in Bethlem next morning.

The next was, that those into whose hands the correction of past abuses, and regulation of future management were to be placed, were not to be removed from these employments (except in certain cases, and by certain modes prescribed) till after a portion of time sufficient to finish, at least some of the great works committed to their care. An objection to this appears very strange, for reason and common sense seem to point out, on the first view, the utility and the necessity of a permanent continuation in office, for those who had a work to do, for which time was requisite, and the futility of thinking to accomplish which, without time, had been evident from the many impotent attempts already made: But they who first started this objection

jection to it, as a thing unheard of before, did not know, or which is more probable, did not chuse to bring to public remembrance, that the Commissioners for Indian affairs were to stand in a situation much resembling that of the Judges here, for the preservation of whose dignity, independence, and other causes, their commissions are, by his present Majesty's most gracious bounty, of his own free motion, made, not as formerly, *durante bene placito*, but *quamdiu se bene gesserint*, but that they may be removed on the address of Parliament; and this seems to have been taken for the model of this act. It appears one of the many chimerical effects of prejudice and passion respecting this bill, that a regulation received with gratitude and transport at one time, and under one Administration, should, under another, be brought as a severe charge, and cause sufficient to dismiss the Ministers, who thought, as any reasonable men would have thought, that they were doing what must be most grateful to the nation. Is it not wonderful that the people should be of opinion, that the more and stronger the dependence of great officers (for from the magnitude of the trust committed to them, such these were) on the Crown, the more for the public good? If this be not one of the highest prerogative principles, I am ignorant what is. But as I write more to the many than the few, to the unlearned more than the learned,

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to the deceived more than the deceivers ; and as these are more conversant in private than public scenes, to make my ideas intelligible, I will again beg leave to draw an instance from private life, and suppose a man possessed of an estate very distant from his place of residence ; that his stewards had long and greatly imposed upon him, and that he was ignorant of the number of acres, the produce, and the value ; and, in a word, that he was likely to be ruined. That to avoid this he had, at different times, appointed surveyors to measure and make maps, valuers to estimate, and bailiffs to manage it, but that having, by some secret and pretended friends, for their own ends, and least any of the new stewards might, by their abilities and integrity, destroy their hidden and dishonest, and obtain an open and honest influence, been persuaded to change his stewards once a month, and that they naturally as often changed the surveyors, valuers and bailiffs, before they could make any progress in their business, by which his ruin, and that of his tenants, was every day fast approaching. In this distress, he would probably apply to a select number of these tenants, whose interest was linked and connected with his, for advice, which would be, you have now, we believe, an able and a good steward ; but we cannot, after what has so often happened, say, that you may not be again led by wicked and designing men to change him, and those he has chosen

to do your business, from whence all this evil has come. Put it therefore out of his, or any other stewards, nay, out of your own power to ruin your estate and us, by leaving things in this confusion; let the honestest surveyors, valuers, bailiffs he can find, be appointed, and a security given to them, that they shall not be removed till they have had time to accomplish your design, unless they should behave ill, and upon proof of this ill behaviour made to us, we join in desiring you to do it. I cannot bring myself, for a moment, to think, that there is now any man, speaking the real sentiments of his heart, who will say that this advice would not be good, or that the effects it must produce would not prove highly beneficial.

The last objection was to the mode of appointing the Commissioners, as it gave the patronage, not to the Crown, but to whom? To yourselves, through and by your Representatives; for never will I admit, for a moment, that the people and their Representatives are not the same. Whether the Crown would, or would not have had as much influence in appointing these Commissioners, even through you, as it ought, I do not design here to examine; but after all that had been said relative to increase of influence, after all which had been done to diminish it, all which had your most hearty approbation and applause, surely they were most extraordinary

extraordinary arguments from the people of England, that the influence of the Crown has been too much diminished; it ought to be increased. The influence of the people has been too much increased; it ought to be diminished. These high prerogative words, in the mouths of the high prerogative Ministers, who were at that time opening the highest prerogative plan which had ever been attempted, would have sounded in character; but when posterity shall read, that these were the words of the people of England themselves, they will consider the history in which they shall be related as the most incredible fiction.

I hope you will do me the justice to allow, that I have fairly stated facts, that I have, with as strict impartiality as my understanding enabled me to observe, laid before you those parts of the conduct of the late Ministers which drew down your censure, and have placed them, with my best judgment, in their true light. That I have not gone one step into panegyric, how largely soever I might, in their endeavours (fruitless endeavours, I fear, but all which could then be made) to correct the blunders and errors, to say no worse, of the peace of Versailles, by explanations and declarations, in their unremitting attention, as far as it could be seen, during their short official life, to every part of the empire, or their peculiar care to lay the burdens they were

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forced to lay, on those parts which were best able to bear them; nor entered into a vast field open to me, and covered with the strongest testimonies of the general opinion of their conduct, every where, but in this island, by relations, authentic and indisputable, which I could make, of the unbounded exultation and joy with which our enemies received the account of their dismissal, and the accession of their successors. I will now proceed to state, as fairly, that conduct of these successors, previous to and on their coming into office, which you received with such unexampled applause, and what they have since done to ensure a continuation of it, from a fair-judging and unbiassed public.

It is not a bold assertion, that when the present open and concealed (for it is compounded of both) Administration quitted those offices, which the infamous for things must have their true names) peace of Versailles had made it impossible for them to hold, it was determined that they should very soon resume them, on the first fair occasion which could be seized, to make you yourselves the keys to open the doors of the dark and secret passages, which lead to prerogative on one hand, and depression, and at last extinction of your own privileges, on the other. Nor is it a bold assertion, that every motion to complete this plan, and to guard it from attack and danger, was at that very time as maturely

maturely considered, described and drawn out, as the most able General could the marches of an army in presence of an enemy. I will not, in support of these assertions, bring surmises or conjectures, or circumstances which will admit of doubt; I will recal to your memory one fact, which not only defies refutation, but it defies even the preliminary step, contradiction. When the Whig Administration, with Lord Rockingham, came in, it was proposed that some, and not a great many Commoners, who, by family, by fortune, connexions and abilities, had the fairest claim to the honour of the Peerage, should be admitted to it. The secret advisers immediately took alarm at this, and urged the necessity of refusal; because, if the Whig party in the House of Peers were strengthened, their view of controuling the House of Commons, by the number of high prerogative Peers, would be destroyed, and their hopes of returning speedily into open power blasted. The request was modestly pressed. In reply, it was alledged, that so many Peers had been made in this reign, that the body was like to become too large for their dignity, and that as no great and distinguished services had been produced in favour of some of the persons proposed, it was not right to make peerages too common, and too easily obtained. It was on these reasons steadily opposed, and in conclusion peremptorily refused; and it was early

suspected, that some of those who then composed the cabinet, were not anxious for the success of the measure; because, as they were certainly meditating a separation from their then colleagues, to join with men of principles more congenial with their own, they did not wish for honours, of which their particular friends could have only a share, whereas, by waiting a little, they might have the whole; and the few peerages which were given being for one description of men, and none for the other, which the conduct of these counsellors so soon displayed, evinced the good ground for these suspicions; and on the death of Lord Rockingham, the friends of your privileges were dismissed, and the prerogative men kept their ground. When the Portland Administration was formed, there was an exact repetition: the same request; the same arguments against granting it; the same refusal. But when in the last effort to debase and crush the representatives of the people, it was found necessary that all engines should be set to work, in aid of every temptation, every lure which the most experienced, and the most abandoned and shameless dealer in corruption could employ, the baits of titles and honours were thrown out, and then neither the concealed nor the ostensible advisers, brought any reason of exclusion from want of family, want of fortune, want of connexion, want of ability, or want of services, and there appeared at once a list

list of Peers, just equal in number to that never-to-be-forgotten creation in 1711, and for the same purpose, the triumph of prerogative over your privileges. The repetition of this act, at different periods, shew the regular digested plan, pre-concerted and executed in various manners, as the change of circumstances required, to produce two great effects, the establishing a certain controul over the House of Commons, and placing a force in the hands of the concealed Ministers, so resolutely refused to the members of both the Rockingham and Portland Administrations, in order to place in the hands of the former a force sufficient, at a proper season, to restore to employments those, who, while they had been in, had satisfactorily proved the nature of their principles.

To carry this system into execution, it was necessary to fix their batteries against the men then holding these employments on such popular ground, that their removal from them might appear to be an act of yours, and not springing from the mere will and pleasure of the Crown, without motive or cause assigned. What that ground was to be was totally immaterial, provided the works to be carried on upon it would produce this effect. Some slight attacks were made by the present nominal Minister, on taxes and the expenditure of public money, in army, navy, and ordnance estimates,

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but without any effect, except that by cutting out of these last such sums as were the most essential, and necessary for the public services, to get favour with some oeconomical country gentlemen of the most respectable characters and best intentions, but absolutely unacquainted with the matter; he betrayed his own ignorance of it, and by being obliged to retract his opinion, and replace them, the crudity of his ideas in points of business, and the commencement of that precipitation, a presumption with which he has dared to obtrude them raw and undigested on the Public in EVERY act (a bold word, but I believe it will appear a true one) he has, since his being in office, offered to Parliament: but the serious engagement was to be in the field of the East-Indies, and in chusing it, no small degree of craft was shewn, and some conduct and generalship in taking such positions as offered them great advantages, of which they availed themselves, to draw you in to be their allies, to aid and support them. For the last India Bill went avowedly to declare, that great evils had arisen, from mismanagement in the conduct of affairs, both at home and abroad; and many persons having been, and being employed in both places in this conduct, great numbers might be involved in the censure of errors or crimes, and consequently liable to be deprived of the means of repeating them, and perhaps brought to punishment;

ment; and as each of these had his little circle of relations, friends, and dependents, who might be joint losers with him, and each of these relations, friends, and dependents, standing in the same situation, with respect to others, like the effect of the pebble in the lake, the circles encreased and grew wider and wider, comprehending many more than to less cunning and more superficial observers, in matters so nearly touching their own interest as they were at first sight, appeared likely to be affected, and among them, numbers of you, who thinking the properties of your friends and patrons, some of you your own property, others their hopes of it, in danger, without examining or knowing how these properties had been, or were in future to be acquired, whether not by means repugnant to every idea of honour, justice, and public good, in some cases; or whether in different cases, you had totally been mistaken, and took for danger what was to be security and preservation of just and equitable acquisitions, guilty and not guilty, you all joined loudly in the confused and not understood clamours, which seemed to be the sound of death to the minister, and cry of victory for their antagonists, who, at the nice moment, bringing down the strong reserve of prerogative, drove them from their posts, as it was generally thought, even by the victors (I speak upon knowledge, and can prove) for a very short time, because

cause they were still supported by a body hitherto irresistible; the Constitution to which Prerogative, when going beyond its just limits, had always given way and yielded the field, of which body you, the people, forming the chief ranks, it was fondly thought and argued, you would not desert the colours on which your rights, privileges, and dearest interests were painted, and leave the officers, you yourselves had appointed, to be cut to pieces by YOUR OWN enemies, much less to revile them in the moment of their defeat, and load them with reproaches and abuse, for the gallant defence and resistance they had made in YOUR cause.—Who could have thought, that when you guided your old standard, that to which you so eagerly flocked, was erected and displayed to you by a Peer, who came out of the closet, and proclaimed aloud, that, unauthorized by office, and therefore unconstitutional, he had been there to give secret advice, then openly to proceed to use the arts of seduction, bribery and corruption (for it is in essence equally bribery and corruption, to intimidate a man by the fears of losing, as to influence him by the hopes of gaining) and to obtain votes imply, that he had authority to say, that the Crown was doing that which struck at, and shook the foundation of the constitution, the taking notice of what was doing in Parliament before the subject could come legally within its cognizance? Who could have thought,

thought, that such principles, and such actions, could be the charms to allure you into his service, and to call aloud on Prerogative to disperse that army, at that moment fighting your battles; saying, what in that hour of infatuation you so often said "We have formed the Constitution, and "when we please we will change it." Beyond a doubt you may, and as the people of Sweden, on some fair morning, present yourselves before the Throne, and say, "O King, we come to resign our rights, privileges, liberties, and properties; we are weary of having any share of government ourselves; we will once, in five or ten years meet, to make a mock shew of giving such parts of our properties as may appear to be in our possessions; and we pray that (tired and sick of having been so long free) we and our posterity may, from hence forward, be slaves for ever." I doubt much, whether on a future, and not very distant day, this would create more astonishment in sober and reflecting minds, than what you have already done, and the ministers must have been very weak and dull indeed, not to have seized the powers you so friendly offered them; to turn what to themselves appeared a transient advantage, into a solid and substantial conquest, to maintain them in the posts they had taken. They complied with your intreaties with rapture, and dissolved the Parliament openly and avowedly, because the House of Com-

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mons was neither to be bribed nor threatened, to support men, by your advice acting on principles diametrically opposite to those of the Constitution; and, for the first time, since the reigns of the Stuarts, declaring they set that assembly at defiance, and giving a lesson to future ministers how to get rid of one which should be refractory, by that one act on these motives proving beyond contradiction, that to the exultation of Prerogative and Tory principles over your privileges and Whig principles, they owe their situation; and, that of the rise of the one, and downfall of the other, you yourselves have been distinguished instruments.

Having brought the ministers to the entrance of their ministerial habitations, for though the dissolution of Parliament seems in order of time to be subsequent to their taking possession of them, yet, till that was over, they had not a certainty of an hour's permanency in them; I will, in my next letter, lay before you those parts of their conduct since they have thought themselves in certain possession of their offices as most substantially affect the public.

ALFRED.

L E T T E R III.

*Il y a des Loix, que le Legislatteur a si peu connues,
qu'elles sont contraires au bût même qu'il s'est proposé.*

MONTESQUIU.

EVERY body must have frequently observed, that many events pass by us at first unnoticed, till by some chance or accident we discover a light which amazes us, that we have not before perceived them. Of this nature is that I am going to mention, the COALITION, which is the basis of the present Administration, and which I do not recollect to have heard taken notice of, probably, because it had not the good fortune to be baptized, and introduced into the world by two such eminent and dignified godfathers, as those who contended for the honour of having named the former.— However, certain it is, that it does exist, and though as yet nameless, has, by its services to the Administration, as richly deserved not only a mere Christian name, but as elevated a title as any of those on whom they have lately been for less merit so prodigally lavished. There is an old saying,

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“ That one man may with more safety steal a horse, than another look over a hedge.” Just so here; the Christian-named Coalition fairly kicked one Administration out of doors; the Un-christian-named Coalition as fairly kicked another in, and has locked the doors, and still, “*mirabile dictu!*” keeps it there. The first Coalition has been arraigned, tried, condemned, executed; because the coalescers had in ONE part of their political lives, before their union, been of different opinions.—The second Coalition has been approved, extolled, exalted with the loudest acclamations of applause, as a constellation of virtues, to the Heavens, though the coalescers had never, in ANY part of their lives, before their union, been on any question of the same opinion. Whether the members of this last had, as many have thought, the same goal which they have now reached, of place, power, and emolument from the beginning, in view, I shall not take upon me to determine; but if they had, they took very different roads to arrive at it: one having followed that which seemed to have been marked out by political virtue; the other, disdaining hypocrisy, having, with elevated front, and undaunted countenance, boldly marched along that marked out by political vice. The one began his public career in all the apparent enthusiasm of patriotism; his motto was, “*Libertas et natale solum.*” His text “*Dulce et decorum est pro Patria mori.*”

mori;" and he set out to run his race with a blushing modesty, which many thought natural; and never did it shine with more lustre than in his "*Nolo Episcopari*:" on being pressed to bring into the House of Commons his first plan of Parliamentary Reform (of his sincerity in which some have doubted, but none now can, who has read his answer to the Chairman of the Belfast Committee) he, with a becoming diffidence, expressed his inability to undertake so arduous a task, nor could he be persuaded to do it till overcome by the arguments of his steady firm friend, a lately-created Earl, who, after vehemently inveighing against the hideous effects of corrupt boroughs, pressed the violation of the charters of all boroughs, and their extirpation, magnanimously offering to include those he called his own in the general massacre, with a disinterestedness, the sincerity of which some doubted (for the world was wondrous sceptical in those days) but which he has now removed from doubt, by his operations in a borough where his name had never been heard, to overturn a natural, and consequently corrupt interest of two noble families, to establish a pure untainted one of his own; an attempt in which, unfortunately for his public spirit, he never can succeed, while an immoveable, inviolable regard to law, justice, and integrity, holds its seat in that palladium of British liberty, a committee on oath of the House of Commons. —

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The other, with long and hasty strides, rushed along the opposite way, dashing from him, on each side, as he advanced, the phantoms of appearances; using one set of men, and one set of principles, as the first steps of the ladder of ambition, and when he had mounted as high as he could go on them, taking another set of men, and another set of principles to get to the summit: one day the bosom friend and confidant of a minister and his supporter in all his measures, because he was minister, and therefore violent in his opposition to his present colleague in all his arguments, and all his opinions; the next, the most strenuous opponent of his, because he was no longer minister, and as violent in his professed attachment to him whom he thought likely soon to be so. In his orations, never embarrassed by awkward and disheartening timidity, either when drawing nice and sophistical distinctions, between delinquency and expediency, and proving the justice and the right of punishing innocence, if expedient, or when treating with contempt an assembly, of which he had the honour to be a member, by carrying through the first stage a bill of the most public nature, slated to produce the most salutary effects, and of the most urgent necessity, to be passed into a law without delay, and then dropping it; because, by the revolution of human affairs, it was expedient (his favourite topic) for him to do it without cause assigned,

assigned, a man always, "all things to all men," and strictly consistent, because never departing from his maxim, that "whatsoever king should reign, he'd still be Vicar of Bray."

That there is a Coalition between these seeming extremes of light and darkness, they do not deny; it is their boast and glory. Some may call it "horrid, monstrous;" I shall not, I profess myself a peace-maker, a friend to all coalitions. When two men think differently on any subject, one is right, the other wrong. When both think alike, it is possible both may be wrong; but it is as possible both may be right; therefore, as in the first case, no good can result, and in the latter, some perhaps may, I am for that which has the chance at least of producing it. My business was only to point out what you did not appear to have observed; a Coalition as clear, as marked, composed of as discordant and heterogeneous principles and actions in the present administration, as in the last. A philosopher in his closet, not very conversant with the modern manners, would, with the unalterable operations of causes and effects, and the eternal fitness of things, wear out his lungs, to prove that your sentiments and actions, in respect to these two Coalitions, must have been exactly the same; but all that he would really prove would be his most absolute ignorance of every thing
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relative to (on this occasion) so eccentric and unaccountable a body, as the addressers of Great Britain.

This Coalition established, and by the dissolution of Parliament having acquired a temporary stability in their posts, introduced an immense code of taxes, out of the chaos of which I will select a few for your consideration *, and offer first one which appears to me least objectionable, the tax on horses; because it purposed to be a tax on real luxuries, that is a tax on such things as a man can spare, without essential inconvenience. And I beg leave to remark, that we are often apt to call for taxes on luxuries only, without reflecting how many articles are called luxuries which are of the greatest advantage to trade and manufacture, and give bread to thousands. A great distinction lies between luxuries useless, or perhaps injurious to the community, and luxuries beneficial. This tax seems to affect things under the first descrip-

* The first steps of a new Parliament always are to Elections, Scrutinies and Petitions. I do not choose to take any notice of some black rumours which have spread over the world of ministers conduct on some of these, they must be false. No man can be so lost as to have given cause for them: if not, and if ever it should be proved, that Ministers have actually endeavoured to influence men on these questions, there would be no punishment too great for them; for then, indeed, your liberties, your privileges, would cease to exist even in name.

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tion, as the subjects of it are in most cases (not in all) more for pleasure than necessary use. But whatever was the design, the execution certainly does not give any high idea of the abilities of the drawer of the bill, which, if the rules we have laid down for good taxation are just, militates against many of them. For, in the first place, the loss of time in going to make entries, is far from being an inconsiderable object; and if as many persons, particularly in the remote parts of the island, live at great distances from market-towns, and may have occasion to make alterations in the number of their horses, so as to require fresh entries more than once in the year, the expence, the loss of time, and the trouble to such, are not small. It is next open to such evasions as may make it fall very short of the calculated produce; for every man who has such a number of horses as makes it for his interest, may be a licensed dealer, or a licensed letter of horses, subject to a very small part of the contribution he ought to pay, and to no penalty whatsoever. But this would be a fraud; granted in conscience, but not punishable. And if the person, who erects himself into the framer of a law, cannot guard against easily-committed and punishable frauds, a compliment may be paid to his innocence, but a small compliment is due to his legislative capacity. From a very recent instance, a judgment may be made of the extent and accu-

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racy of this capacity. In framing a new tax, a calculation is or ought to be made of the produce where it is to be levied, on separate and single articles. To make this calculation tolerably exact, a tolerable exact enumeration of these articles is requisite; for else the calculation must be vague and uncertain. From an advertisement in the papers a few days past, it appeared, that the number of horses was so much greater than expected, that it was thought right to allow ten days more for persons to make entries; which was clear to a demonstration, that nothing like an enumeration had been made, consequently what was obtruded on Parliament as such, was a calculation in the air, without any foundation whatsoever. This is called a financial mistake, and not unpardonable. I do not quite admit of this; but be it as it may, the consequences are serious. For the Commissioners of the stamp-office have granted ten days more to make entries; that is, they have taken upon themselves the power of DISPENSING with a plain, clear, decisive law of the land. For by what part of the act is any such power lodged in their hands? Was this done of their own motion, or was it by ministerial mandate? When these questions come to be asked in a proper place, satisfactory answers will not be easily found; nor will the ignorance of the ministers be admitted a sufficient plea, for daring to do an act as injurious

to the Constitution, as that for which, a very few years ago, on a much more urgent necessity, To prevent a famine, it was thought right that the ministers who advised it should have an act of indemnity. One part may be productive of increasing vexation, that every man is liable to information against him by a stamp officer on SUSPICION only, by which no man in the kingdom can be secure, that he may not every day, and every hour in the day, be called upon to clear himself from this suspicion.—As I wish to do justice, it is right to take notice of one clause, which is free from all exceptions except one, that which lays a tax on running horses, as luxuries of the first class, and not occasioning loss of time, trouble or vexation: but from evasion, it is not, which has been often already practised; but be it remembered, that the merit is not due to the original proposer of the tax. There is one general observation on this, and many other of the taxes we shall take notice of, which may be mentioned, once for all, here; that though there is a heavy penalty on not attending to make entries, within limited times, there is no penalty on officers who do not attend to receive them. They may be punished on complaint: true; but recollect the loss of time, vexation, and trouble, of going half a dozen times; and then your revenge, for it is not redress, is a complaint of which no notice may be taken: for we all know what often happens in complaints against one officer made to another.

The next two Taxes I shall take together, that on cottons and linens, and that on hats, because they agree in doing the worst any taxes can do, laying an imposition in the first step on manufacture, industry and commerce, which will and must spread and increase as it goes.—As to the first of these taxes, I will refer you to the remonstrances, from not a very remonstrating part of the world, against ministerial measures, the northern part of this island, and the letter from the traders of Manchester to the House of Lords, which cannot be read without horror, as it states, that by this bill hundreds of thousands must lose their bread, and either emigrate to foreign countries, carrying with them the secrets of their art, or starve at home. Can it be imagined, that France will let pass this opportunity of getting these articles of trade, more especially when we seem to invite them in a most particular manner, by having, by the peace, given them that country (Tobago) which produces the best and the greatest quantity of the raw material, and are now forcing those who are skilled in the arts of working it, into their service. You will remember, that both the first and second steps in this great business are the works of the same ministers: that one seems consequently to follow the other as part of the same plan, and tending to the same end; and that, if they had been dictated by the ministers of Versailles, they could not have been more for
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their benefit. In the progression, these two acts bear a strong resemblance, enhancing the price of the commodity and diminishing the value. It is said the sum imposed is too small to do this. The assertion is not true. Compared with the intrinsic value, the sum is not so small; but if it were, do you forget the penny a bottle on wine, which drew from the consumer six pennies? It must be so here: for in both these taxes, the vender being obliged to pay immediately what (by the credit he is forced to give, and which in trade must be given) he does not receive till at a great distance of time, is under the necessity of charging interest on this advance; and this interest cannot be simple interest of five per cent. on the advance, but interest also on the profit he might make in such a time, which will bring this, without any fraud, to a height your clear-sighted ministers had no conception of; and if fraud be by some added to it, to an enormous one indeed! The treaty of Versailles, by the cession of Tobago, enabled France to come on a foot of competition and equality with you for cottons; by ceding the fur trade, it enabled America to come on a foot of competition and equality with you for hats: And now, by these acts, you have brought what was only competition and equality to decided superiority for them, and exclusion from these articles for yourselves; and they will have a monopoly. Let no man here talk of drawbacks;

drawbacks; the veriest school-boy, in the article of trade, knows that drawbacks are deceptions. When the commodity is debased, or its price enhanced, and the manufacturer oppressed, there is no trade for drawbacks to operate upon, and in most, if not all cases, they have hitherto been, and always will be, illusions to deceive the ignorant. Add to these the time and trouble of such repeated entries and notices, perhaps to be made at great distance and cost, and the intrusion of Excise officers, at all hours and all seasons, into your inmost and most private recesses, and then return your thanks to the intelligent framers of these acts.

The game act has for its object, a very proper subject for taxation, being an undoubted article of luxury, and far be it from me to state any objection against making those pay, who, by their situation, are able to pay for luxuries, if they are not such as go to injure trade or manufactures, which this certainly does not. But it is drawn up in such a loose, confused, and unintelligible manner, as would disgrace any clerk who had been six weeks in office. Was it the intention that a most extraordinary distinction should be made between a qualified and an unqualified person, in favour of the latter? A qualified person must take out a certificate, or if he does not, and is found, not in the actual destruction, but in the PURSUIT (a word of large signification)

cation) of game, he is liable to a penalty of fifty pounds. An unqualified person, if found in the pursuit of game, if it cannot be proved (for suspicion, in this case, will not do) that he has not actually destroyed it, is not liable, by this act, to any penalty whatsoever. By former acts, he is liable, on PROOF (for that PROOF must be, that he has destroyed game, or in some cases, on presumption, but a strong presumption, by game being found in his possession, to a penalty, of what? Of five pounds. A qualified person, if his little lap dog barks at a hare, may be construed to be in PURSUIT, and must pay fifty pounds; and an unqualified person, with guns, spaniels and greyhounds, all in full cry, and actual PURSUIT, is exempt, for the penalty of five pounds cannot be levied for PURSUIT. But if an unqualified person should be absurd enough to wave his great privilege, give in his name and place of abode; say he is qualified, and demand a certificate, is the clerk of the peace authorized to bring him to a proof of his qualification? No. If a man will tell a falsehood, and few poachers will stick at that, the poor clerk of the peace must give him a certificate, or pay fifty pounds. This poacher is not a Trinity, but he is a DUTY for a qualified person, and an unqualified person may exist in him at the same time. It is said, in justification of the Minister who brought in this act, that his object was not the preservation
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of the game, but the raising a revenue, and therefore he does not care whether a person is qualified or not; the more who apply for certificates, and pay two guineas, the more his object is attained; but he must be very short-sighted indeed, if this be so, not to see, that on the preservation of the game depends his revenue, and that if it be annihilated in one year, there will be no certificates in the next; but perhaps he thinks the duration of his power may not come to that term, and therefore, like the savage, cuts down the tree to get at the present fruit; or the man in the storm, who, being told the ship was sinking, said he was only a passenger. That the Crown Lawyers, in the House of Commons, should not be sportsmen, is no great wonder; but as I apprehend it lies with them to see that public bills should be correct, if it is not absolutely their business, *ab initio*, to draw and frame them. It seems very extraordinary, that they should not be able to write two or three pages of plain, intelligible, common sense, or so very weak-sighted, as not, in the vulgar phrase, to see the length of their noses, short as some of them are, and not run them into such superlative blunders; one good will result from this, that the next generation of students will not complain that the study of the law is a dull one, for when they read the acts of their fabricating, they will find it a truly laughable one.

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But if this be an absurd bill, for it is no more, as neither the existence, the welfare, nor the prosperity of the state depend on the existence of hares, partridges, pheasants, nor growse, the next is something worse, the tax on bricks and tiles; for it is a most unjust one, sinning against the most fundamental and essential principles of good taxation, being local, partial, confined to fall on a small body, within a small district, and falling most heavily on those on whom it ought not to fall at all, the poorer and lower ranks of the community, resident by necessity, not by choice (for they cannot chuse their place of abode) within the precincts of its baneful influence. Many of you have heard, or read the arguments against the cyder tax, because its operation was local and partial; and others for it, which do not apply, in any shape, in the present case. It was said, there are two liquors which are the common drink of the people, beer in one part, and cyder in another. Beer is taxed most heavily, both in its finished and unfinished state, in malt, hops, and the liquor itself when compleat; whereas, both the raw material of cyder, the apples and the liquor, are totally exempt from charge or imposition, in any state whatsoever; therefore the charges of partiality and locality, make against the repeal of the tax; notwithstanding which very forcible reason, the idea of laying a tax to affect only one part, appeared unfair and

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unjust, and it was repealed. The buildings of Great Britain are constructed either of stone, wood, or mud, and covered with straw, or of bricks, and covered with tiles. If, for many years past, those of stone, wood, mud and straw, had been subject to a very heavy duty, there would have been a strong argument for a similar and equal one on bricks and tiles; but there has not been such a duty, therefore this tax is what I have said, partial, unequal, unfair and unjust; and let the members for the counties and boroughs where these are the only materials for buildings, see how they will answer to their constituents, for such gross inattention and neglect of their interests, in a new partial land-tax, for such it is. It has been said, for what has not been shamelessly lately said, as if we had totally lost our understandings, that it falls heavier on the rich than the poor, because their consumption is the greater. I deny it positively. A man of five thousand a year, received without labour or pains, who builds a palace, will pay MORE to the tax, undoubtedly, than the poor labourer, out of eighteen pounds five shillings, earned by the sweat of his brow, for his cottage; but the man of 5000l. per annum, builds one room less than he intended, saves the amount of the tax on the originally proposed expenditure for his palace, and feels no inconvenience, for he has still rooms and space more than necessity requires; but the wretched labourer must

must have space enough for himself, his wife and children, to lie down and rest their wearied limbs, though perhaps no larger than they will have in their graves, and cannot spare one inch of it; therefore he has no relief, nor means of lessening the expence, which to him is intolerable. So far it affects individuals; and I do insist, wrongly and unjustly. But it goes also to affect the State in a very sensible part; and I beg leave to observe, this does not contradict what I have said of its partiality and locality, for though the weight of payment lies only on a few, there are circumstances highly detrimental to the whole. Those districts where, from the quality of the soil, and the plenty of fuel, bricks and tiles are most in use, are those (Middlesex excepted) which furnish the greatest and best supply of timber for the navy; because the other materials for buildings having hitherto been plentiful and cheap, timber was neither applied to this purpose, nor cut down before it came to great age and size; the reverse will now happen, and in the diminishing and utterly neglected state of naval timber, the consequences will be fatal. The truth is, the composers of this act have taken their ideas from the great and opulent cities of London and Westminster, and their environs, not having been in, or not knowing the state of the rest of the kingdom; and therefore, want of knowledge and want of experience, qualities of some little use

to legislators, left them ignorant of this fact; and I cannot help saying here, though going perhaps somewhat out of the way, that from the first hour of entrance into office of this Administration, to the present, a total inattention to, and ignorance and contempt of, naval services and naval encouragement, have conspicuously attended on all their steps. Besides these distinguishing marks, this bill has, in common with many others (some already mentioned) those of the numerous repetitions of journies and expences, for entries, notices, and long advances of duties by persons, here more than in others, very little able to bear them, enhancing the price, and thereby increasing the burden on the consumer, which, with visits of Excise officers, at all hours and seasons, make up no trifling sum of loss, trouble and vexation.

These taxes being yet only in their youth, I have reasoned so far, chiefly on probability of what they will be in the vigour of their manhood; but probability, on such foundation, is little short of certainty. As to the tea act, we have passed probability, and have had such experience already, that it is needless to enter into a minute investigation of it now. In alleviation of the errors, and their consequences, it is said, the framers of it may have been deceived, and ignorant of the effect. It is a bold saying, for ignorance of an effect of such importance,

portance, in any men who stand forward to lay such weights on their country, is presumption unpardonable. But it is not true; for if they were ignorant, they were almost the only men in the nation who were; and I do assert, and can prove, there were many who were not deceived, no, not for a moment, but when they read the bill, pronounced what must, and what has since followed. Other tax-bills may have been the children of ignorance, but this is the deformed offspring of design, and a bill so weakly, and so wickedly conceived and brought forth, never before found its way into your statute books. We hear it is to be corrected and amended; words of insult. The fact is simply this: The India Company, the favorite supporters of the Ministers, on whose shoulders they came in, and hope to maintain themselves in power, have had a bribe of no small magnitude; they pay no duties, and the diminution of the price of their commodity is so small, that their profit is immense. Smuggling continues in full force, for not one of the obvious modes of preventing it have been adopted; and the public, and particularly that part called the country gentlemen, who would have shrunk with horror at the sound of an additional LAND-TAX, if called by its proper name, have been made the most egregious, tame dupes, to lay on themselves and their constituents, under the name of COMMUTATION (which, construed into ministerial taxation sense,

sense, like reciprocity in ministerial peace making sense, signifies giving all, and receiving nothing), a real, solid, heavy LAND TAX.

To the Post-office act I profess myself an enemy, both as to the principle, and most of the parts. When a regular carriage of letters was first established, it was on an idea of both political and commercial advantage, by a safe and expeditious method of sending and receiving intelligence in matters relative to government, which had not then adopted the practice of sending wantonly messengers express, from every trifling office, with every trifling packet, on every trifling occasion, at an expence the public is not aware of, but which shall, in proper time, be laid before them, and also for the benefit of commercial men, on the security, expedition, and secrecy of whose correspondence, much depended; and the raising a revenue did not then form any part of the plan, the charges on postage being only for the purpose of answering the cost of the carriage. But as the carriage of fifty letters did not cost more than the carriage of one, it naturally followed, that as trade extended, and let me add as literature became more general and diffused, a new correspondence, Revenue, like a stream which at first small and inconsiderable, by the influx of many others, grows to a majestic river by many small additions,

additions, gently, and without strain or force, grew to a great size; and had a reflection been made on this, and attention paid to encrease both these correspondences, Revenue would, without a murmur or complaint, have gone hand in hand with them, increasing and swelling together; but this idea was too liberal for presumptuous, but narrow and contracted minds, who, like intemperate and unskilled riders, will know no way of managing their steeds but by whips and spurs, till the generous beast at last, by ill usage provoked, indignant throws them off, and leaves them to wallow in the mire. So the framers of this, the most widely oppressive, and darkly pernicious of all their financial schemes, have thought to increase the revenue by means which must infallibly counteract their own design, and within a very short time bring on a great diminution of it, at the same time that they cramp commerce, destroy confidence and security of correspondence, and give literature a severe blow. You will find these not vague assertions, when you consider the number of reviews, magazines, and pamphlets, on various subjects, which WERE circulated through all parts of this island and Ireland, either free from all charge under covers of members of parliament, or at a small expence. You may hear that the tax on these is inconsiderable, and that there are many exemptions. It is not inconsiderable, though nominally small.

small. A penny on twenty shillings is a small tax, a penny on six pence is not a small tax, and six-pence on six-pence a great one; but what is twelve-pence on six-pence, and still more when trebling, quadrupling the first cost, which will often happen in the present limitation of franks, all which must operate to lessen the sale, that must lessen the production, and the duty on paper and stamps decreasing in proportion, the balance will be found to be against the revenue, and the tax not merely nugatory; but, what is very singular, instead of a GAIN, a LOSS; and these operations on these publications will strongly affect literature; for though they may be deemed trivial compositions, they are often very far from it; and I will go further and say, in general not so, and though not always high flights of genius, or works of profound abstruse learning and knowledge, are in a certain degree improving exercises of the mind, which strengthen and lead it on till it becomes capable of greater and more laborious acts; besides, in a free state, these very works were of great utility, in conveying to every part and person, being within the capacity and reach both of understanding and purse of all, a knowledge of men and things, not only pleasing and agreeable, but instructive and necessary, which may in truth have been a powerful argument against them; for though ministers in struggles for power may not be above using such instruments,

instruments, perhaps from what we have recently seen, not always fairly nor honourably for the attainment of their ends ; yet that being done, they would gladly carry off and conceal the weapons they have employed, in dread of their being turned against themselves. As to the authority given to open letters and packets on SUSPICION ONLY, by any little paltry magistrate, or any little paltry clerk in office, for there are too many such, who may employ it for the worst purposes, it has shocked and revolted all ranks and conditions, but most forcibly men in business, who declare their inability to carry on their correspondence, while their fortunes, and the credit which is so delicate to men in their situation, are held on so precarious a tenure. It is a GENERAL WARRANT to every justice of peace, and every clerk in the post-office, against the credit, the properties, and the liberties of every man in the kingdom. These inquisitorial detached powers I am not fond of at any time, or on any occasion ; but when I see them stealing in one by one, and forming an aggregate fund of prerogative, I think myself bound to awaken your attention. But beside the correspondence of men of business of every description and denomination, there is another correspondence, which, to a superficial thinker, may appear trifling, but which I by no means admit to be so, I mean a correspondence by letters of mere

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amusement and entertainment. I confess I do not think contributing largely to the amusement and entertainment of great numbers of all ranks and stations, an object unworthy the care of the most grave and serious legislator, who appreciates happiness truly, that is, according to the value put upon it by the receivers or the lovers of it, who are the only judges; and such a correspondence, from the secrecy and cheapness, was carried on in a more extensive manner in Great Britain, than in any part of the world; I will say also in a manner more improving to the minds, particularly of the youth of both sexes; and I appeal to those who have lived, as I myself have done, (and thereby draw my observations from living manners, not suppositions) in foreign countries, whether there is not a most striking difference between, and superiority in the young people of this country, who have had the easy means of exercising their minds early in their lives, over those of all other countries, not excepting our boasted neighbours the French, whose ignorance and want of information are glaring, and whose style, when they attempt to express the few ideas they possess, is beneath that of the lowest ranks of people here, which, as it certainly is not owing either to natural defect, or want of education, can be attributed to nothing but that rust of the faculties, contracted by want of exercise, in being deprived by the insecurity

security and the cost of postage, from acquiring ideas by the collision and communication of them with others, which we had the means of doing, while correspondence was in every sense, both of money and security, free. I hope I shall not be cavilled at, and told of the brilliant productions of many, even females in literature, particularly in France. My rule is a general one, with many exceptions, but true upon the whole. I do not mean to dispute the erudition or the genius of a Madame Dacier, nor a Madame du Chatelet, nor many others; at the same time I will not admit they cannot be paralleled or surpassed here, though perhaps the abilities may not have been as ostentatiously displayed; but it is of the bulk of the people in each country I speak, and not of the select and few, for these have nothing to do with my argument. From the temper and disposition of the people of this country, few bold and open attacks on their rights or liberties have succeeded; but many concealed and secret ones, rising by means scarce perceptible, and gradually proceeding have. The first step high prerogative ministers, aiming at the erection of despotism, will take, is by clogging the liberty of the press, by small, and, in the beginning, weak and imperceptible impediments, to restrain the liberty of thinking freely on political topics, or freely expressing thoughts in writing, to break the elastic and resisting vigour of

the mind ; sure that when that is done, the great obstacle is removed, and they can, without difficulty or danger, accomplish the remainder of their project. Jealousy of ministers is the essence of freedom, and in nothing can this jealousy be more properly displayed than in watching the first dawn of a design upon the press ; and I do most solemnly declare, that I look on this act in this light. By taking away all security and secrecy, they have severely wounded mercantile correspondence ; by increasing expences they have clogged and impeded mental exertion and cultivation, and when they have sufficiently restrained the freedom of writing, it will be an easy work to restrain, in enfeebled minds, the freedom of speaking, and the Parliament of Great Britain will be a Parliament of Paris, to register without hesitation or murmur their arbitrary edicts. That ideas of this sort are not very remote from them, I refer you to a part of this act, a continuation of the plan they discovered to you, when they avowed their contempt of the House of Commons, by declaring the confidence of that assembly not necessary to their ministerial existence, I mean that part relative to franking letters. In order to make members of parliament appear mean in the eyes of the world, they have left them the poor pecuniary consideration of saving a few pence (not an object to men in their situation) by receiving their letters without charge, and

and deprived them of the only valuable thing, the power of obliging, and in some cases serving those to whom such a saving might be an object. It is said this was only a feather. It is not true. Whatever gives one man a pre-eminence, of what nature, sort, or size soever, is a solidity. It was this, and be it noticed, it was the last distinction left to your representatives. But admit it were a feather only, What has almost every thing been, and is now in the world? What was the oak-leaved chaplet, the mural or the naval crown to the Conqueror, the laurel wreath to the poet, the sir-names Africanus, Coriolanus, but titles, feathers light as air? What are then the coronet on the coach, the ribbon on the shoulder, the flattering and bewitching sounds of my lord, your grace (flattering and bewitching we have lately seen them), are they feathers beneath the acceptance of the gravest and most serious personages in the nation? Will such spurn these trifles from them with derision or contempt, or have we not seen them purchased at the extravagant prices of honour, virtue, and love of their country? What are the robes and full-bottomed periwigs of the judges, the mace of the speaker, nay, the crown and sceptre of royalty, and all the pride, pomp, and circumstance of majesty, what are they? They are realities, without the aid of which the great and weighty business of the world, formed as the world is, could not go on. The
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man who, dressed himself in the feathers of his pride, styles himself a philosopher and sage, may call them gaudy, unessential trappings; but stile himself what he will, he is a fool who says so, for he reasons on what human nature is not, and not on what it is. Whoever strips man of his feathers, strips him of his substance, and like Martin in the Tale of the Tub, when, in the impetuosity and zeal of his reform, he violently tears away the lace and points, he tears away the cloth also. It has always been, and always will be my confirmed opinion, that instead of taking away one atom, even of a feather, from what ought to be in this Constitution one of the most dignified stations, that of your delegates and representatives, more honour should be added, and more respect given to them. Sorry am I to observe, your opinion lately has been the reverse, and that you have eagerly lent your own hands to pull them down, and degrade them and in their persons yourselves. I consider this act as a concealed attack on the freedom of the press, consequently the freedom of political thinking; a prelude to the restraint of political speaking, and a preliminary step to deprive Members of Parliament of their last shorn, and almost extinguished beam of distinction, more offensive in the political than the financial part, as the tendency and effect of the former must be more pernicious to the Constitution; the financial

cial part only counteracting its object, by which, indeed, the nation will be a loser, and by new impositions must make the deficiency up a trifle, compared with the mischief attending the former.

I will not trouble you with any further examination of these tax bills, conceived in one spirit and executed in one insufficiency; but there is one point I wish you to attend to, that by the number of these acts an evil often and justly complained of, is greatly multiplied—the encrease of the number of penal laws. Mr. Justice Blackstone pathetically laments the number of laws in his time, the penalty of which was death, without benefit of clergy. Read all the acts of last sessions, observe by the number of them the encrease of this great penalty, for trifling offences and petty crimes, and say, is not the life of man held cheaper in Great-Britain than in any, not absolutely despotic and tyrannical, state upon earth, and have not your legislators been particularly lavish of it, and wanton in the use of their power in all these acts? and you will also see, that by this great number of acts, they have multiplied the number and opportunities of frivolous and vexatious appeals to Justices of Peace, and other persons authorized to inflict penalties, not of death indeed, but heavy and severe, for very inadequate causes, by which neighbours are impowered to teaze and vex each other

other every day, and ill-will amongst men seems to have been rather sought for than avoided.

Having submitted to your consideration the East-India Bill brought in by the late Administration, which drew down the severity of your condemnation, it will, I hope, not be improper to do the same with the East-India Bill brought in and carried into a law by the present Administration, of which you have not, as yet, expressed any disapprobation; and in doing this I shall not, for the reasons I assigned respecting the other, dwell much on how far it is likely to answer the proposed ends of correcting past abuses, preventing future, and well regulating the affairs of the East-Indies, for which a more extensive knowledge of that country in all its circumstances is requisite, than many of you, or perhaps I myself possess, but will confine myself to those parts of the not yet disapproved Bill, which stand opposite to parts of the condemned Bill, and which are clearly within our comprehension and understanding, and will shew its general tendency, operation, and effect, with respect to both the East-India Company, the nation at large, and Constitution. Your first objection to the former bill was, the violation of charter; it was therefore to be expected, that having been silent on this head, nothing of this nature was to be found in the present bill: what then must have been

been my astonishment, and my opinion of your consistency, when I did find regulations directly opposite, and contradictory to the original charter, and read that *all such powers and authorities given to, or vested in the Proprietors and Directors of the said United Company, or in any general or special court thereof, respectively in, and by any act of Parliament or CHARTER, as are contrary and repugnant to this act, or any thing herein contained, shall be, and the same are hereby repealed, any thing contained in any act or CHARTER, or any custom or usage to the contrary notwithstanding.* When you have recovered, after reading this clause, be so good as to observe, that what these are, is concealed under general terms, and not specified, and consequently have a range and latitude infinitely wider than any thing in the former bill, where every innovation was clearly and specifically defined, and therefore, beyond comparison, a much stronger alteration or violation, if you chuse to call it so, of CHARTERED rights; you will also please to remark, that I say nothing of the merit or demerit, the right or the wrong, my observation going only to the PROPRIETY, CONSISTENCY, and IMPARTIALITY of your conduct.

As to your next great subject of alarm, the ROBBERY, as it was called, of property in ships, warehouses, &c. &c. the present act certainly

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does not openly say, that the management of this property shall be taken away from those who have hitherto had it, the Directors of the Company; but if it divests the Directors of all power and authority, makes them mere cyphers only, "*Truges consumere*," retains them as only a colour and imposition on you, and, in truth, of no use whatever, but as means of influence, at an expence in salaries, and other shameful articles, to an impoverished and BANKRUPT society, of more than seven thousand pounds a year, and in fact, only the servants, who are to receive and obey the orders they receive from their masters. Does it not, in as much reality, commit the robbery as the other did; and if it does not do this, I am ignorant of the true intent and meaning of the clauses, relative to the laying before the Commissioners all dispatches, letters, &c. received, or to be sent to India, which letters and dispatches the said Commissioners are to return with instructions to the said Directors, which Directors are to send the letters, orders and instructions so amended, and NO OTHERS, to their servants without delay, which directions, the said Court of Directors are bound to conform to. To have recourse once more to familiar instances drawn from private life, let me ask you, a trader, and you, a farmer, if I have power and authority, any thing in your charter or your lease to the contrary notwithstanding, to alter and amend your orders and letters, relative to how
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your ships and merchandize, or your waggons and your teams are to be employed, and you are to send those letters and orders so amended and no OTHERS. Have I not your ships, your merchandize, your waggons, your horses, in a word, all your property, as much under my command, and at my disposal, as if I had written those letters with my own hand, *ab initio*, and not by you, my deputies and servants, who have nothing to do but to obey? But it is said, those letters, orders, and instructions, are to relate only to the military and the civil government, and have nothing to do with trade. Any man who sees truly the nature of our East-Indian possessions, the inseparability of military and civil government and trade; the two first arising out of the latter, having no existence but by what they draw from that, the limbs receiving their nourishment from that body, living when it lives, and dying when it dies, must see at the same time the pure nonsense of this distinction, that either the heads which imagined it must have been in the greatest confusion themselves, or, through design, wished to convey confusion to all others; and I cannot, on this occasion, help observing a striking difference between the two bills; the first reserved nothing behind, had no secret, no subterfuge, no cranny for explanation and equivocation; it was not drawn by lawyers, who, with all my respect for the profession, do not, always,

sufficiently divest themselves of the profession. It was not drawn by men in love with dark and hidden ways, shunning the paths of sun-shine and light; it was drawn up in openness and candour, shewing, without disguise, what was deemed right, which openness and candour were made the handle to effect its ruin; whereas this does the reverse, and in many instances, and particularly here, leaves a hole for interpretation, quibble, and doubt, to creep in. I grant it does not mention the word Trade, but does it not mention Revenue? From what does this revenue arise? From rents of lands and profits of trade. How are these to be applied? To the carrying on trade. Is there one of you who will say, that if (to use the plain word) the money, without which the trade cannot be carried on, is under the direction and management of one set of men, the direction and management of the trade itself is not under the same set of men. If any man doubts the inseparable connexion between the revenue and the trade, I refer him to the manner in which the investments have been made to carry on the trade, and how he thinks, without these revenues, the trade could have been at all carried on, or how long it would now subsist, and to attempt to conceal this connexion, is to attempt to impose, by a poor, pitiful, unworthy evasion, immediately seen through, and I lay this down an axiom demonstrated, whoever has the direction

tion and management of the revenue of the East-Indies, has the direction and management of the trade in him absolutely ; but in order to throw more cloud over this, the bill says, " If the Directors think their immediate department intruded upon, they may appeal." To whom are they to appeal? To the Privy Council. Who are the Commissioners from whose intrusion they are to appeal? The Privy Council. If ever there were a barefaced and indecent mockery, it is this. An appeal from the same Privy Counsellors, in one room, to the same Privy Counsellors, in another room, whose decision, in the very words of the act, is to be FINAL AND CONCLUSIVE. It is impossible to make a comment upon this. The fact is simply this, that the property of the Proprietors is put just as much into the hands of the present Commissioners, under this act, as it would have been in the hands of the Commissioners under the former act ; and if you are not alarmed, and frightened out of your senses at this transfer, which as yet you have not shewn any symptoms of, you had no reason to be as you were, alarmed and frightened out of them at the other : but if you seek for a just cause to be alarmed and frightened at an attack on the Proprietors, read the following clause : *that no order or resolution of any general court of the PROPRIETORS of the said United Company, shall be available to revoke or rescind, or in*
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any respect to affect any act, order, resolution, matter, or proceeding, of the said Court of Directors, by this act directed or authorized to be made or done by the said Court, after the same shall have been approved by the said BOARD, in the manner herein before directed, any law or usage to the contrary notwithstanding. By this, the Proprietors have not only their charter violated in a certain manner and degree, but "*vi et armis*," at once wrested from them, and all their rights, privileges, immunities, franchises, &c. &c. &c. under whatever denomination, or in whatever terms described, forfeited and lost for ever (or for the duration of this act, which are not, perhaps, synonymous terms) and the greatest Proprietor has, from the date of the royal assent, no authority, direction of his affairs, or power or controul over his property whatsoever. It is the wanton humour of the times, for certain bodies of men to be "*Felones de se ipsis*;" the laudable example you have lately given, is here followed by the proprietors of East-India stock, who quietly submit to an aristocracy, erected on the ruins of democracy, and who having vented their whole stock of indignation against the imaginary evils of the first bill, have none left for the real ones of the second, and are totally insensible of the difference of the manner of treating them, by the two bills; the former of which directed, that an annual account should be laid before them (the Proprietors)

whereas

whereas the latter entirely passes them by, as unworthy to have any cognizance of their own affairs, and orders it to be laid before Parliament only.

I must again observe, I do not deliver any opinions upon right or wrong.

As to the complaint of the permanency of the Commissioners, there is undoubtedly no room for any such in EUROPE. Confusion in every thing relative to the East-Indies is, by law, established here, and the Commissioners of the day will issue out mandates for this day, which their successors will contradict to-morrow. But the case is different in respect of INDIA, permanent and unlimited power is given to the Governor, which, as long as this act endures, whoever is once possessed of, and relinquishes, must do it by choice, for there is nothing on earth can compel him, nor will any man dare to make a shew of resisting him for a moment, while he is impowered to doom to imprisonment without limitation of time, or to banish from that country, by sending to England, perhaps to the ruin of his fortune, any person who has made himself obnoxious to him, without alledging reason or cause, but the new-fashioned favourite inquisitorial one, SUSPICION.

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As to patronage, it is where you wished to have it, you have nothing to do with it. The Crown giveth, the Crown taketh away; blessed be the prerogative of the Crown.

There are two clauses which, though not coming immediately within the comparative object of my plan, I must briefly take notice of; one which makes a man a SELF ACCUSER, obliging him to lay open the whole state of his affairs, unpleasant and irksome at any time; but if in trade or business, highly detrimental to the "*sine quâ non*," credit, and so repugnant to, and directly flying in the face of one of the most celebrated and approved maxims of law, that I should have thought no man, but particularly no professional man, bearing reverence and respect to that law, would ever have admitted.

The other, that which directs the procedure to be by *information of his Majesty's Attorney-General*. I will not trouble you with any observations of mine upon this, but refer you to the speeches of a noble Lord (a strenuous supporter of this bill in all its parts, and now a Commissioner, sitting, acting, and judging under the powers given by it) in the House of Commons, on the introduction and support of a motion made by his Lordship, for the *suppression of this most iniquitous mode of proceeding*,

ceeding; wherein you will find this subject amply discussed in a much more masterly manner than my poor abilities enable me to do.

Having examined the parts of this bill which stand immediately opposite to those parts of the other bill, having the same subject, but treated in a very different manner, there remains one point which distinguishes it from any bill ever engendered in the brain of any minister; I say engendered, for never was a similar one brought into the world, I mean that which deprives certain British subjects of what they have been supposed to hold the most valuable of all their possessions, THE TRIAL BY THEIR PEERS; that this the hitherto deemed Gibraltar of the Constitution should have been surreptitiously betrayed and given up even for a moment; that an attempt should have been made not to violate, but to perpetuate the most horrid murder on the first of charters, Magna Charta, and all subsequent charters, bills of rights, &c. &c. which (this extinct) are useless papers indeed, much less that it should have been carried into execution, posterity will scarce believe: for repealed, and speedily repealed it must be, but the tradition will remain. Had addresses on this signed by every man, every woman, every child possessing the use of reason, poured in from every part of the kingdom, there would have been no

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cause for wonder, and that there will be I do not doubt when it comes to be known; for few are as yet apprized that THE TRIAL BY JURY is taken away, and from a certain description of supposed delinquents, and another mode introduced, by which a door is opened, and a precedent established to extend it step by step, till it comprehends you all, and gives a stab to the Constitution beyond the power of medicine to cure. These are no rhapsodies, no creations of the imagination, no predictions of contingent future events: they are the words of sober and sad truth, announcing to you the actual presence of the first of evils already come. And let me intreat you who may not as yet have reflected on this stupifying blow, to consider well what the difference is between what is torn away, the TRIAL BY JURY, and what is substituted in its place. In the first, when a man was accused, a number of persons were appointed of as near as might be the same rank and circumstances in life, and as free as possible from interest in the decision. In place of this, a number are appointed of very different description of situations and conditions, widely separated from those of the party accused, Peers, Bishops, Judges, members of the House of Commons. In the first case, the truth of the accusation must be confirmed by the UNANIMOUS suffrage of twelve of his equals and-neighbours indifferently chosen, and superior

to all suspicion. But in the second, seven are a sufficient number for the trial; and these seven may be three Judges, one Bishop, one Peer, one Director, and one Proprietor of India Stock. For neither of these last are excluded by law, nor excludable by challenge, if they remain in the last seven, though they may perhaps be the accusing parties, and deeply interested in the event. And is it necessary even these few should be unanimous? No, a majority may decide; and the two parties the most interested, and the Bishop and the Peer, if such sacred characters, could be supposed susceptible of influence, are to pass a sentence, by which the whole property, the fruits of a long life of labour, toil, and danger, are confiscated to some of his very judges, and he and his family consigned to ruin and infamy for ever. For he has no remedy, no means to recover Fortune or Fame, however unjustly deprived of them. There is no revision, no appeal; nor can they who have pronounced the fatal sentence ever be called to account in any shape or manner whatsoever. But they are to be chosen in the most impartial manner, by lists and ballots. We have many of us seen the effects of lists and ballots; and I call upon every man who has to point out one, I say one single instance, in which, if the minister interested himself, the persons chosen by lists and ballots, were not the very persons he would himself have named; therefore this is the compleatest deception. When

a Knight of the Garter is chosen, it is by lists; do you suppose the choice free? When a Bishop is to be elected, a Congé d'Elire, that is a leave or licence to choose is issued to certain persons; is this choice free? trust me the choice by lists and ballots in the present case will be exactly the same. I cannot close my observations on this better, than in words of much more powerful authority than mine, those of Mr. Justice Blackstone. "*The liberties of England cannot but subsist so long as this Palladium, Trial by Jury, remains sacred and inviolate, not only from all open attacks, which none will be so hardy as to make (Mr Justice Blackstone died before the year 1783) but also from all Secret Machinations which may sap and undermine it, by introducing new methods of trial: And again, these inroads (new and arbitrary methods of trial) upon the sacred bulwark of the nation, are fundamentally opposite to the spirit of our Constitution; and though begun in trifles, the precedent may gradually increase and spread, to the utter disuse of juries, in questions of the most momentous concern.*"

If these be the STRONG measures so loudly called for, from such STRONG measures in such WEAK hands, God soon rescue Great-Britain!

Having done with all these bills, permit me to make one general observation relative to this, and every other brought in by the present administration;

ministration; the great difference between their present state, and that in which they were at first presented to Parliament: And if, after having been obliged to give up some of them totally (the Coal Tax for instance, on the haughty and peremptory demand of one man only, whom they did not DARE to disobey) after having been obliged to give up the principles of some, and bring them in again on new ones; after the rejection of the most essential parts of others; and after all the alterations, amendments, corrections, they underwent in committees and re-committees, they still stand a heap of blunders, absurdities, errors, private inconveniencies and vexations, and public CONSTITUTIONAL WRONGS, What must be now your opinions of the framers of them, who having exhibited these specimens of their want of abilities in every operation of Government, yet hold these reins you placed in their hands, to drive you next year into an abyfs of (if possible) still more ruinous effects. And if, after coolly and impartially examining their conduct, in every step, from the humblest line of ministerial action laying on taxes, to the high and lofty one of making laws for interior government of mighty empires, and exterior conducting treaties with foreign Princes and states, you cannot find one point on which to rest real solid approbation, what have you to answer for to yourselves

yourself, your posterity, and your country, for the part you have taken.

Of the two objects I had in view when I began these Letters, the discovery of the principles of your late actions, and the motives which induced you to them; the first is clearly attained: for the proofs which in our enquiry have appeared, that the principles of those you have so distinguishedly honoured with your favour, are of the purest unmixed Tory and high prerogative nature, leave no doubt that yours (for the first time I believe) must be the same. In the other, the discovery of, your motives to adopt principles so new, and act conformably to them, I confess I have totally failed; for were I, from the investigation we have made of every public act, to draw the natural conclusion, it would be, that you had acted diametrically opposite to what you have done; and having no clue to guide me any farther, I must here finish my research.

If I have expressed myself with too much warmth on any part, which, feeling as warmly as I did on many, and therefore neither able, nor indeed hypocrite enough to wish to make my sensations and language disagree, I may perhaps have done, I beg for your indulgence. Personal animosity to
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any individual member of administration, I have none. None of them have personally offended me. And for the private character of some of them I have much respect ; but their aggregate public conduct throughout, with all the powers I am master of, to the latest hour of my life, I will boldly and loudly, on every occasion, arraign and condemn.

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ALFRED.